Arlington Redevelopment Board
Monday, May 4, 2020, 7:00 PM
Meeting Conducted Remotely via Zoom
Meeting Minutes

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.
PRESENT: Andrew Bunnell (Chair), Kin Lau, Eugene Benson, David Watson, Rachel Zsembery
STAFF: Jennifer Raitt, Director of Planning and Community Development

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The Chair called the meeting to order and notified all attending this Zoom meeting that the meeting is being recorded by ACMi.

The Chair explained that this meeting is being held remotely in accordance with the Governor's March 12, 2020 order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, Section 20. This order from Governor Baker allows for meetings to be held remotely during this time to avoid public gatherings.

The Chair asked if anyone would like to speak to please use the raise hand function and the Chair will allow time to speak during the Open Forum portion of the meeting. The Chair said that going forward speakers will be unmuted and may be on video if they like.

The Chair introduced the first agenda item, ARB Property Update. Ms. Raitt said that the Town was waiting for the State to issue construction site COVID-19 precautions and guidelines. After reviewing, them we are now signing the contract and issuing a notice to proceed on Monday May 11, 2020. The first part of the Central School Renovation Project will take place on the second floor and the ground and first floor renovations will follow. Mr. Lau asked what the premium to proceed with the current protocol will cost. Ms. Raitt said that Health and Human Services have reviewed the protocols and anticipate that it will be approximately an additional $20,000.00, which would come from contingency. Mr. Lau said that due to increased costs, some of his projects have asked to hold off until the extra procedures are not required. Mr. Lau asked if delaying the project has been considered. Ms. Raitt said the Town has already postponed signing the contract and are ready to proceed. Ms. Raitt said that they would likely have to hire a new designer if the project is significantly delayed. Mr. Watson asked what the cost implications would be if the project must start over. Ms. Raitt said that they must release the bond of $7.8 million for the project, submit a new RFP, and pay the fee to hire a new designer. The Town has already spent funds on designer and OPM services.

Ms. Raitt said she would like to discuss the request for proposals timeline and process for the 23 Maple Street property. The tenant lease is ending on June 30, 2020 and all space in the building will become available. Ms. Raitt said that the tenant at 23 Maple Street is currently the highest paying tenant in the portfolio at $52,800.00 annually. This property is Zoned as R7 and has 10 dedicated parking spaces behind the building. Ms. Raitt said that she needs to issue a RFP to request proposals from prospective tenants and will need one or two members of the Board to review the RFP proposals received. Ms. Raitt said that the process may start in July. The Chair asked about the state of the current tenant and if there were any changes due to COVID-19. Ms. Raitt said that the tenant is scheduled to move out at the end of the lease and at that point Ms. Raitt said can evaluate property conditions. Mr. Lau asked what the building may be used for. Ms. Raitt said that it will probably be used as office space. Ms. Raitt would like to consider what would be a good fit for the neighborhood and would look for a management plan from potential tenants. The Chair volunteered to assist on the RFP committee.

Mr. Watson moved to approve The Chair's nomination to the RFP Committee for 23 Maple Street, Mr. Lau seconded, approved 5-0.

Mr. Lau moved to approve the Department's submittal of an RFP for the 23 Maple St. property, Ms. Zsembery seconded, approved 5-0.

The Chair introduced the last agenda item, Open Forum. The Chair opened the floor to the public.

Don Seltzer presented a visualization of the Hotel Lexington on Mass. Ave. from the perspective approaching from the west. Mr. Seltzer said he found irregularities in the picture. (Mr. Seltzer shared his screen to show the images of this area of Mass. Ave that he discussed.) Mr. Seltzer compared the telephone poles in the images against the Town's GIS data to show irregularities in the developer's visualization. Ms. Zsembery said that the building department relies on the actual plans and elevations, not photoshopped images provided by the developer.

Michael Ruderman said that he sent correspondence to the Board regarding the Board's policy of concealing images of participants during remote Zoom meetings. Mr. Ruderman asked why this is the Board's policy, why it is preferable to not allow full participation of the public, what is the risk of doing so, and when the Board adopted this policy. The Chair said that the policy is at his discretion and the Board will continue to review the policy as meetings go forward. The Chair said that anyone who wishes to speak may do so. Mr. Lau said it is never the Board's intention to censor anyone. The Board is learning as we move forward and is looking to prevent incidents like what happened during the Conservation Committee meeting ("Zoombombing"). Mr. Ruderman said that his comments are being presented at a lesser value than other commenters.

Michael Quinn, The Council on Aging Board Chair, thanked the Board for the Central School Renovation project update. Mr. Quinn said he looks forward to updates going forward and offered help if there is anything the Council on Aging can do to move progress along.

The Chair said that he feels that the current way meetings are being run is the best way. Mr. Benson said that he finds it helpful to see the person speaking and there are limited numbers of thumbnails with video available. There are advantages of having the speaker on the screen, and not others in attendance. Mr. Benson also said he likes to see materials on the screen during meetings but would like to review materials and visit sites in advance. Ms. Raitt said that any public comments are currently due by noon the Friday before the meeting. Mr. Benson said it would be helpful to spend some more time with materials before the meeting. Ms. Zsembery said that she agrees with Mr. Benson that it would be helpful to have more time to review visuals in advance. The Chair said Open Forum is to bring items that are outside the current schedule and it would be best to submit materials to be shown during a meeting by Friday at noon. Ms. Raitt suggested asking to have all visuals be received by noon on Friday and written comments must be received by noon on Monday before meetings.

Mr. Lau moved to adjourn, Mr. Watson seconded, approved 5-0.

Meeting adjourned.