Arlington Redevelopment Board
October 19, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Remote Open Meeting
Meeting Minutes

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.

PRESENT: Rachel Zsembery (Chair); David Watson; Eugene Benson; Kin Lau; Katie Levine-Einstein
STAFF: Jennifer Raitt, Director, Planning and Community Development; Erin Zwirko

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The Chair opened the meeting at 7:00pm and turned to the first item on the agenda, Docket #3633, 1500 Mass Ave, review of application filed July 27, 2020. Presenting for applicant: Attorney Robert Annese; Monte French, architect; Emily Driscoll, designer; and Darren DeNucci, developer. The new site plan was displayed.

Mr. Annese stated the revised plan is compliant with mixed use regulations; an accessible unit was also included, but affordable housing unit was not economically feasible. He requested ARB relief with respect to setback, parking, and carpooling.

The Chair asked Mr. French to address stair access to the side yard, and he confirmed they would be needed to get from side yard to the green space. The Chair then stated her preference for entire ground floor as office space, but for four units so as not to trigger the requirement for an accessible unit; this would also address parking issues. She requested comments from the Board.

Mr. Lau stated per codes, four or more units would trigger accessibility requirement, but he will leave that to code enforcement to decide.

Ms. Raitt stated per Director of Inspectional Services Michael Byrne, only if a fifth unit were added would the accessibility requirement be triggered.

Mr. Lau approved of the new design and asked about casement versus double hung windows. Mr. French confirmed double hung. Mr. Lau suggested adding more vertical trim. He asked if two top levels are condos or rentals; Mr. French stated likely rentals. Mr. Lau asked Mr. French to consider possible roof deck, and they discussed a few other details.

Mr. Watson agreed with his colleagues in favor of office space versus accessible units. He asked whether tree plan was resolved. Mr. Annese stated all trees removed would be replaced. Further tree discussion ensued. Mr. Watson requested all tree issues be resolved/ approved before moving forward. Mr. Annese requested tree plan be left as subsequent to the evening's vote. Mr. Watson stated this is open to discussion but disapproved of the removal of mature trees that could not be replaced in a mature state. Further discussion ensued. Ms. Raitt offered to post most recent tree warden letter.

Mr. Watson then discussed the TDM plan; he agreed that bicycle and short term parking plans meet bylaw requirements, but had further suggestions and stated is open to other suggestions from Board (paid parking, MBTA passes, et al.).

Mr. Benson approved of the proposal and made several suggestions re office space rental, and parking spaces, tree plan, and runoff.

Ms. Levine-Einstein approved of the new plan and agreed with first floor office space use.

Mr. Watson asked about restroom placement on the first floor. Mr. French addressed this. Mr. Lau stated that one bathroom is enough for the square footage. Discussion followed.

Ms. Raitt explained that the plan on screen was earlier iteration showing retail, not office, space on first floor.

The Chair turned the meeting over to the public.

Andreas Kellis, abutter, disapproved of removal of three additional mature trees, requested the board not reward this negative business tactic.

Carl Wagner stated the proposed mixed use is not permitted in B1 area.

Don Selzer approved of applicant's open space inclusion but stated the plans do not show access. He also was concerned about nonconforming slope. He stated there is no provision for snow displacement. He stated a new four-family is not allowable in a B1 district; all others have been grandfathered in.

John Worden clarified that the Master Plan does not call for "more" housing but does call for senior and affordable housing. He objected to the Board's breach of trust with Town Meeting regarding mixed use, and proposed turning down the plan.

Chris Loreti stated the new plan is not in keeping with character and integrity of the district. He stated that the Board is being sued for repeating a similar "past mistake" and objected to issuing a permit for non-permitted use.

The Chair turned the meeting back to the Board and proposed clarifications of civil plans at a future meeting.

Mr. Benson agreed to see the proposed changes at a future meeting. Mr. Lau approved the plan with revisions, did not see reason to delay it. Mr. Watson requested seeing more on the TDM plan, proposed parking is currently not sufficient. Mr. Annese stated they are open to either add a shower or charge for parking, which would satisfy TDM. Mr. Benson stated this would satisfy David's TDM concerns, not his. Further discussion ensued, including possible charging station. Mr. Watson repeated his concerns about resolution of the tree issue. Mr. Annese stated they would go by the bylaws and the tree warden's decision, and repeated his wish to move on the project and have the tree issue be subsequent. The Chair agreed with Mr. Annese, but stated her concerns about usability of open space. Mr. French stated he could provide an updated plan to show access.

Ms. Raitt stated she could provide other dates for a continuation if needed. The Chair wanted resolution on the civil issues and the usable open space prior to voting, but asked if others were ready to vote. Mr. Lau stated he was ready; Mr. Benson preferred continuance; Ms. Levine-Einstein was ready to vote; Mr. Watson preferred continuance. Ms. Raitt proposed November 2nd. Mr. Annese agreed.

The chair listed items to be addressed: usability, access and fencing at rear usable open space; changing windows to double hung; adding vertical separation to side facades; possible roof deck or solar panels; driveway drainage; changing accessible unit to office space; possible shower room for offices; electric vehicle charging station; possible EV parking for more than one space; and trees.

Mr. Annese asked Mr. Benson what he required per the Transportation Management Act. Mr. Benson replied he asked for the charging station; that the lease limit one parking space per tenant; and rear parking is reserved for tenants and not offices. Ms. Raitt added including signage for parking regulations.

The Chair requested a motion for November 2nd continuance. Mr. Benson so moved. Mr. Watson seconded. Mr. Lau voted no; Mr. Watson voted yes; Mr. Benson voted yes; Ms. Levine-Einstein voted no;

The Chair moved to the next item, Docket #3637, renovation of vacant storefronts at 476 Mass Avenue.
Chad Cohen, applicant.

Ms. Raitt stated the Arlington Historical Commission has approved the plan.

Mr. Cohen stated his intent to replace current storefront with glass front to make it more rentable. Ms. Levine-Einstein had no questions. Mr. Lau asked whether only signage is being considered. Ms. Raitt stated the changes are more significant. Signage would be reviewed when a tenant appears. Mr. Lau then agreed with Ms. Levine-Einstein and approved the change. Mr. Benson agreed no questions. Mr. Watson also agreed. The Chair requested and got confirmation of no signage at goosenecks.

The Chair turned the meeting over to the public. There were no comments or questions. The Chair closed public comment and requested motion for approval by Mr. Benson. Mr. Lau seconded.

Board voted unanimously to approve.

The Chair moved to the next item, presentation of the economic analysis of the industrial zoning districts.

Ms. Raitt introduced the presentation and Ms. Zwirko posted it. Eric Halvorsen of RKG Associates was joined by Emily Innes from Harriman to present the draft of their work on proposed zoning.

The Chair turned the meeting over to the Board. Mr. Benson approved but suggested more inclusive definition of "solar ready." He also asked whether there would be a conflict in allowing blue, solar, and vegetative roofs at the same time. He addressed possible bylaw issues with vertical farming and marijuana growing.

Mr. Watson thanked the presenters and raised his concerns about sufficient bicycle parking in the area. Ms. Levine-Einstein approved and thanked the presenters. Mr. Lau was concerned that too many requirements might discourage growth and suggested transportation/residential options. He mentioned possible incubator spaces to promote long-term business growth. Mr. Watson stated the importance of finding the right balance between encouraging developments and getting the right kind of development. He liked the idea of a possible shuttle service.

Ms. Innes responded Mr. Benson's comments, stating that she would look at different definitions of "solar ready"; that vertical farming would be specific to food cultivation; and she would look into possible roof/solar conflicts.

Mr. Halvorsen stated his interest in Mr. Lau's incubator space idea.

The Chair turned the meeting over to the public.

Don Selzer stated that most jobs in Arlington do not pay enough for residents to work and live here, and that Arlington should encourage the use of industrial zones for high paying private sector jobs.

John Worden stated that inserting 40B residential into the industrial zone is a terrible idea. He stated that there is a footnote of the bylaw that prevents mixed use that may have been removed, which defeats the purpose of the study, and goes against what Town Meeting was told by the Finance Committee chair.

Chris Loreti expanded on Mr. Worden's comments regarding footnote D's removal.

Ralph Wilmer stated the draft is not as prescriptive as other zoning bylaws he has seen, and allows developers to choose among different options.

Ms. Innes confirmed that footnote D was removed but was replaced by footnote E, which provides additional residential restrictions.

The Chair requested next steps from Ms. Raitt and Ms. Zwirko. Ms. Zwirko stated the Zoning Bylaw Working Group would meet first week of November and encouraged additional comments from Board members.

The Chair moved onto the public forum.

Don Selzer stated he had requested documents for the 1500 Mass Ave hearing and objected to the long wait time to receive, which goes against the Board's rules and regulations. The Chair stated they will address this at a future meeting.

The Chair concluded the agenda items. Ms. Raitt suggested discussing the Board's rules and regulations at the goal setting meeting, likely on December 9th, time TBD. She objected to the term "grandfathered" for its racist origins; requested that Board members not be referred to as "gentlemen", as there are female participants; and reminded that a variety of housing is a major part of the Master Plan.

The Chair requested motion to adjourn. Mr. Lau so moved, Mr. Benson seconded, Board voted unanimously in favor.

Meeting Adjourned.