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Subject: Docket 3348 - Atwood House cultural significance

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To: Arlington Redevelopment Board

I wish to share with the Board some comments that I made to the Historical Commission at its hearing on August 3.

I live just a few blocks from the Atwood House. For many years, actually for decades, I have used the bus stop right in front of the House. I have long admired the proportions and handsome lines of the building and enjoyed how the nicely landscaped front yard opens up into the larger lawn of the First Baptist Church next door. At one time I thought the House was part of the Church property.

Coming home on the #77 bus and seeing that House and lawn, I knew that I was not in Boston or Kendall Square anymore. Getting off at that stop, the Atwood House signaled that I was home in Arlington.

Others can discuss the historical importance of the architecture much better than I, so I will speak of another criteria used by this Commission, the social and cultural significance of the building.

Dr Charles Atwood was not just any doctor. He was a leading community medical figure in the early 20th century. Dr Atwood was appointed both town physician and our school physician. He was one of the first doctors at Symmes Hospital. During the Great Pandemic of 1918 he was Arlington's Dr Fauci. His former clinic at 821 Mass Ave. is representative of how medicine was practiced in the early 20th century. Our future generations will hardly believe that residents went to the private homes of doctors to get medical care.

It is unfortunate that ten years ago the Noyes family turned down the offer of the Housing Corp of Arlington to utilize the House for affordable housing. It is very sad

that instead it remained vacant and neglected for more than a decade. The House is still salvageable. The owner's architect has examined it and declared it structurally sound.

It is now time for the owner to live up to the terms of the 2009 Special Permit, to preserve the Atwood House and to seriously pursue a proper use for the building.

Don Seltzer
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