

Arlington Redevelopment Board
Monday, September 12, 2022, at 7:30 PM
Community Center, Main Hall
27 Maple Street, Arlington, MA 02476
Meeting Minutes

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.

PRESENT: Rachel Zsembery (Chair), Eugene Benson, Kin Lau, Steve Revilak

ABSENT: Melisa Tintocalis

STAFF: Kelly Lynema, Acting Director, Department 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, MBTA Communities Update. Ms. Lynema reviewed the MBTA Communities presentation prepared for the Board. Ms. Lynema highlighted the adjustments to the requirements, which reclassified Arlington as an “adjacent community” instead of an MBTA Community. Arlington has also been released from having all of the development within a half mile radius from a transit station. Arlington does not have that much land available for development within a half mile radius from Alewife. Ms. Lynema said that compliance with the MBTA Communities Guidelines is tied to eligibility to apply for State grants and participation with other State programs like the Clean Energy pilot program for a fossil fuel ban on new construction, which is part of the new climate bill. The updated MBTA Communities Guidelines call for a new housing district that is at least 32 acres, where it has the multifamily housing (3 or more units) allowed by right, without age restrictions or bedroom limits, has the capacity for 2,046 units. Each of the districts have to be at least 5 contiguous acres, and it is recommended that the districts be located along transit corridors and in commercial centers. Site plan reviews may be required as part of the multifamily zoning as long as it does not cause delays. The Arlington Affordable Housing Trust is also working with the MBTA Communities Guidelines to find ways to incentivize affordable housing production. Local requirements for multifamily homes cannot be different from single family home requirements and the multifamily districts cannot require mixed-use, but mixed-use is allowed.

At Special Town Meeting in November of 2020, 92% of Town Meeting members voted to approve the fossil fuel ban to allow the Town to restrict new fossil fuel infrastructure. Because this was a home rule petition, the Town could not make this a requirement without the State giving Arlington permission to do so. Last month Governor Baker signed the new energy bill, including the Clean Energy pilot program, where Arlington could implement the fossil fuel ban if Arlington meets the stated housing policy by January of 2024. To meet the housing policy, 10% of housing must be on the subsidized housing inventory by January 2024, which we are not on track to achieve, or Arlington must comply with the MBTA Communities Guidelines. Arlington will be applying for technical assistance with the technical aspects of creating the zoning and an action plan, which is also required to be submitted to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Town Meeting must approve the MBTA Communities zoning by December 31, 2024, in order for Arlington to remain in compliance.

The Chair turned the floor over to the Board for questions.

Mr. Lau asked Ms. Lynema if a study been conducted to ensure that the Town’s electrical infrastructure can meet the demand going forward. Ms. Lynema said that the fossil fuel ban would apply to smaller projects; larger developments would have more flexibility. The Town will make sure that the infrastructure can meet the demand for electricity going forward. Mr. Lau said that the time it takes for Eversource to make infrastructure updates creates delays for development projects.

Mr. Benson asked if DPW could confirm the capacity for water and sewer for the additional housing. Ms. Lynema said as part of the 2020 Housing Production Plan, an infrastructure study was conducted by Horsley Witten and they found that the Town does not have capacity issues. Mr. Benson asked about the public participation process and the role of the Board in that process. Ms. Lynema said that would be a great topic to discuss at the Board's retreat.

Mr. Revilak said he reviewed the Fair Housing Action Plan and the Housing Production Plan. Strategy number two of the Housing Production Plan is compliant with this but there are a number of other strategies in the plan that could be ways to implement MBTA Communities requirements. Mr. Revilak said that he would like to treat this not as a high level goal in itself but as a way to approach multifamily housing in Arlington in a way that gains us compliance. Mr. Revilak said he would like to learn more about how the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board (AHTF Board) did their targeted outreach so that the Board may use the AHTF Board's strategies in order to get a broader and more representative set of input. Ms. Lynema said that the AHTF Board's outreach strategy is a good model for how to engage with communities that are not well represented.

The Chair asked that since the accessory dwelling unit (ADU) bylaw is allowed as of right in single and two-family districts, which effectively creates 3-4 units potentially in a two-family home parcel, if that is taken into account as part of creating multifamily units.

Mr. Benson said that he thinks not since the size of ADUs are limited and the MBTA Communities Guidelines do not allow for limiting the size of units.

The Chair said that the MBTA Communities Guidelines limit inclusionary zoning for affordable housing to no more than 10% of units. The Chair would like to review the inclusionary bylaw to determine if this still applies to new districts or only existing districts.

Mr. Benson asked Ms. Lynema about Arlington's safe harbor status. Ms. Lynema said that having a Certified Housing Production Plan (HPP) would allow Arlington to participate in the Clean Energy pilot program. In order to get the current HPP Certified, Arlington would have to add 99 new units to the subsidized housing inventory within a 12 month period. Currently there is not enough housing production in the pipeline to meet the criteria so Arlington will have to comply with the MBTA Communities requirements.

Mr. Revilak asked about the 1.5% general land area measurement threshold that comes into play with the safe harbor requirements. Ms. Lynema said that that is not included as part of the legislation.

The Chair introduced the second agenda item, ARB Retreat Planning. The Chair said that she will work with Ms. Lynema to determine where the retreat will be held on the morning of September 25, 2022. The Chair asked to collect a few items to include on the agenda for the Board's Retreat:

- The Chair said she would like to include permit application processing, to create an electronic version to simplify the process.
- A joint meeting with the Select Board regarding the Housing Production Plan and the MBTA Communities.
- Discuss more robust ways to view the 3D sketch-up tool.
- Discuss what the Board would like to review with Beth Locke from the Chamber of Commerce when she is invited to a future Board meeting.
- The Town voted to fund the Commercial Design Standards so the Board should discuss goals for the standards.
- Zoning bylaw clarifications to include with next Town Meeting.

Mr. Revilak suggested including the Stormwater Management requirements in the industrial zone and identify which level storm event to use in the regulations.

Mr. Lau suggested adding a review of the last two years of Board approved Special Permit projects, where those projects stand, and how the Board feels about supporting future projects. Mr. Lau suggested working on a more streamlined process to help with development.

Mr. Revilak suggested consideration of adopting a process for uses allowed by right, but with site review. One for MBTA Communities projects and another site review for smaller builders/developers as it is easier to get funding for a project that is by right.

The Chair suggested reviewing the Board's goals identified at the 2021 retreat when prioritizing and streamlining goals for 2023. Ms. Lynema said that the Master Plan update process may wrap many of the Board's goals together. The Chair said she does not want the goal of economic development in Arlington's business corridors pushed aside while the Board focuses on MBTA Communities.

Ms. Lynema notified the Board that the vacant Economic Development Coordinator position has been posted.

The Chair introduced the third agenda item, Meeting Minutes (4/25, 4/27, 5/2, 5/4, 5/16, 5/23, 6/27, 7/11, and 7/25).

Mr. Lau moved to approve the meeting minutes for April 25, 2022 as amended, Mr. Benson seconded, approved 4-0 (Ms. Tintocalis was absent).

Mr. Lau moved to approve the meeting minutes for April 27, 2022 as amended, Mr. Benson seconded, approved 4-0 (Ms. Tintocalis was absent).

Mr. Lau moved to approve the meeting minutes for May 2, 2022 as submitted, Mr. Benson seconded, approved 4-0 (Ms. Tintocalis was absent).

Mr. Lau moved to approve the meeting minutes for May 4, 2022 as submitted, Mr. Benson seconded, approved 4-0 (Ms. Tintocalis was absent).

Mr. Lau moved to approve the meeting minutes for May 16, 2022 as submitted, Mr. Benson seconded, approved 4-0 (Ms. Tintocalis was absent).

Mr. Lau moved to approve the meeting minutes for May 23, 2022 as submitted, Mr. Benson seconded, approved 4-0 (Ms. Tintocalis was absent).

Mr. Lau moved to approve the meeting minutes for June 27, 2022 as amended, Mr. Benson seconded, approved 4-0 (Ms. Tintocalis was absent).

Mr. Lau moved to approve the meeting minutes for July 11, 2022 as amended, Mr. Benson seconded, approved 4-0 (Ms. Tintocalis was absent).

Mr. Lau moved to approve the meeting minutes for July 25, 2022 as amended, Mr. Benson seconded, approved 4-0 (Ms. Tintocalis was absent).

The Chair introduced the next agenda item, Open Forum. The Chair said with no members of the public in attendance to comment, open forum is closed.

Mr. Lau and the other members of the Board thanked Ms. Lynema for her work as Acting Director.

Mr. Lau moved to adjourn, Mr. Benson seconded, approved 4-0 (Ms. Tintocalis was absent).

Meeting adjourned.

DRAFT