

Arlington Redevelopment Board
Monday, March 6, 2023, 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

STAFF: Claire Ricker, Director, Planning and Community Development; Kelly Lynema, Assistant Director of Planning and Community Development

The Chair opened with the continued public hearing for docket number 3828, 99 Massachusetts Ave.

Ms. Ricker stated that the applicant had submitted updated drawings. James Rissling of LR Designs presented these.

Mr. Lau stated his opinion that he prefers the red natural brick. He thanked the applicant for reducing the stair tower height, bringing down the parapet, and updating the trim. He asked whether the applicant would consider adding plantings in the parking area; the applicant agreed. He also requested a fence to prevent headlight glare into the adjacent property; the applicant agreed. Discussion followed.

The Chair requested a planting schedule.

Mr. Benson expressed his concern that the project is inconsistent with the zoning bylaw, and gave examples.

The Chair stated that before she gave her approval, she would need to see a sample of the standing seam panel to determine whether it has a finished edge.

Mr. Benson stated that regarding nonconformities, the Board would need to determine that the proposal does not increase any existing nonconformity in order to approve the project. He stated that he also prefers, but is not insisting on, the brick finish.

The Chair opened the floor for public comment. Kristen Anderson stated that she is impressed by the design, and prefers white over brick finish. Seeing no other attendees wishing to provide comment, the Chair closed the public comment period.

The Chair addressed solar on the roof.

Mr. Benson stated that the applicant's option is either to say that they think they meet exemptions described in Section 6.4.2 or to come back with the roof plan with solar on at least half the roof.

The Chair stated that, as regards the rear parking area, the applicant has to ensure that they are not creating any new non-conformities. Mr. Benson suggested that if they consider the parking lot non-conforming, then they don't have to worry about placing the fence and vegetation. Discussion followed. The Chair stated that that this is an existing non-conformity, which the applicant is improving with landscaping. Mr. Revilak requested that when the applicant is working on a landscaping schedule, they consult the Conservation Commission's published list of preferred native plantings for their selections.

The Chair confirmed that the applicant is amenable to adding back in the second exterior bike rack. She also stated that, as regards the open space, the trade-off is adding an accessible ramp to the building. Mr. Benson stated that the bylaw does not allow that trade-off, which would increase the non-conformity. Ms. Lynema clarified that the definition of landscaped open space includes walks and terraces, therefore the Board could consider including the walkway in the calculation of landscaped open space. Discussion followed.

The Chair stated that for the final approval, the applicant needs to provide specifications for the open space; specifications for the metal panel with the reveal; a second bike rack on the exterior; a roof plan showing solar on at least 50% of the roof; fencing along the west side of the parking area; and some indication of the planting using the Town's native planting schedule.

Ms. Lynema suggested continuing to March 27 to deliberate and vote on this item. The Board voted unanimously in favor.

Mr. Benson stated that under 8.1.1, the Board needs to make a finding that the change is not substantially more detrimental.

The Chair moved to agenda item 2, the first night of public hearings for the 2023 Annual Town Meeting.

The Chair opened with Article 31, a zoning bylaw amendment related to industrial district animal daycare use. Mr. Benson recused himself from discussing or voting on this. Kristen Andersen presented; the Board members supported the amendment.

The Chair opened the floor for public comment.

Chris Loreti supported the article, and suggested that the zoning bylaw contemplate the town having overnight kennels.

The Chair stated that they will discuss and vote on the 27th.

The Chair moved to Article 26, the zoning bylaw amendment related to industrial district development standards.

Ms. Lynema stated that current stormwater criteria are too vague, and that she worked with the Town Engineer and the Town's Environmental Planner / Conservation Agent to develop the proposed additional criteria. Discussion followed.

Mr. Revilak asked whether the Board would accept a letter from an applicant's professional engineer certifying compliance. The Chair replied that an applicant's letter would be reviewed by the Town engineer. Mr. Revilak asked whether NOAA 14 is a different standard than NOAA 14 Plus; Mr. Benson stated that NOAA 14 is a little bit less than NOAA 14 Plus.

The Chair opened the floor for public comment.

Mr. Loreti asked why, if the amendment is a good idea, it is limited to the industrial zone. He suggested that the amendment should be more specific about methodologies used to determine reductions in amounts of TSS and phosphorus. He also recommended that this be referred to the Conservation Commission for comment. Ms. Lynema clarified that the Conservation Agent, who co-authored the amendment, is a representative of the Conservation Commission and worked with Commission members to create the proposed amendment text.

The Chair moved to Article 27, zoning bylaw amendment for solar in the industrial districts.

Ms. Lynema stated that this set of amendments comprises minor text changes.

The Chair moved to Article 28, zoning bylaw amendment related to Building Inspector enforcement. Ms. Lynema discussed the administrative changes.

The Chair requested a vote to continue to March 13. The Board voted unanimously in favor.

The Chair moved to the next item, a vote to refer the warrant articles that the Board initially created for the next scheduled Special or Annual Town Meeting. She requested a motion for the withdrawal of the following draft articles:

1. Open Space and Business Districts;
2. Rear Yard Setbacks in Business Districts;
3. Stepback Requirements in Business Districts;
4. Reduced Height Buffer Area;
5. Corner Lot Requirements;
6. Height and Story Minimums in Business Districts;
7. Arlington Heights Business District Zoning Bylaw Amendment and Zoning Map Amendments;
8. ARB Jurisdiction Over Industrial Districts.

She made a motion that those articles previously voted on to be placed on the draft town warrant be referred to the Redevelopment Board for further study.

The Board voted unanimously in favor.

The Chair moved to the next item, Open Forum.

Susan Stamps stated that, as a Tree Committee and Town Meeting member, she has tried to be in tune with the work that Ms. Lynema and Ms. Ricker have been doing. She praised the meetings of the MBTA Communities Working Group, and stated that she is trying to be a bridge between housing advocates and tree/environmental advocates. Discussion followed.

The Chair moved to the next item, new business.

Ms. Lynema advised that the MBTA will hold an MBTA Communities Working Group community visioning session on March 9. Ms. Ricker advised that on March 15, there will be a meeting about Mass Ave and Appleton Street design concepts.

Mr. Benson asked when the Board could expect an update; Ms. Lynema replied, on March 27

The Chair requested a motion to adjourn; the Board voted unanimously in favor.

(Meeting adjourned)