

**Arlington Redevelopment Board**  
**Monday, May 15, 2023, at 7:00 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, Stephen Revilak

**STAFF:** Claire Ricker, Director, Planning and Community Development; Marisa Lau, Senior Planner, Planning and Community Development

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The Chair called the meeting of the Board to order.

The Chair opened with **Agenda Item 1 – MBTA Communities Update.**

Ms. Ricker updated the Board on the preliminary draft report and recommendations from Utile, the MBTA Communities consultant hired by the Town.

- The draft districts were drawn based on the community survey and the work Utile has done to determine the exact numbers of acres and units needed to comply with MBTA Communities.
- Utile has created two draft districts. Ms. Ricker shared maps of both options with the Board. Neither map includes anything that is currently zoned for business or as open space.
- The first option is fully compliant because it meets the requirement that 50% of the new district be contiguous.
- The second option includes the required acreage and density, but it does not meet the requirement that 50% of the new district be contiguous. It is spread out across different neighborhoods, a preference which came out of the community survey. The MBTA Communities Working Group would have to tweak this option to become compliant.
- The drafts both assume three-family buildings across the board in the new districts, but that can be changed; parts of the districts could be zoned for greater density, and the overall footprint could be reduced.
- These drafts are intended to serve as a starting point for discussion.

Mr. Revilak expressed a preference for the first version, because he feels the second version has all the new housing pushed more toward the edges of the town, while the first version has housing that is more central and closer to the business districts.

Ms. Ricker commented that the second version has more housing grouped closer to Alewife, for easier access to transit.

Mr. Lau preferred the first version because the second version puts too much of a burden on East Arlington, which is already quite dense, and having more housing more centrally located will help local businesses. He commented that these changes will be long-term changes, some of which will take time, and increased bus service will likely result over time, so the Board doesn't need to make choices entirely based on transit options as they exist now.

Mr. Benson also preferred the first version. He also appreciated that both versions were designed so as not to lose any business parcels. He expressed a concern with the second version because of the proximity of the increased density area to Alewife Brook, which poses a risk for flooding. Mr. Benson would also like to discuss the best way to present both of these options to the community, and particularly to inform everyone whose properties might be affected.

Ms. Ricker commented that the second version has the advantage of including some of the areas in Arlington Center which already have large parcels and properties, thus making it easier to potentially convert them into multi-family homes.

Ms. Zsembery was concerned that both versions include many properties along Massachusetts Avenue that have been zoned as residential, but that the Board hopes to be able at some point to rezone as commercial. If they are included in the MBTA Communities plan, the opportunity to ever have them rezoned will be lost. She then suggested thinking about mixed used developments along Mass Ave, as a way to both increase Arlington commercial space and create greater residential density along Mass Ave.

Mr. Benson suggested that residential buildings along Mass Ave be zoned for six-family buildings, so that with or without commercial use on the first floor, the density is significantly increased.

Mr. Benson agreed with the idea of six-family buildings on Mass Ave and Broadway, but would prefer to keep the side streets within the neighborhoods at three-family houses.

Mr. Revilak shared that Lexington created an incentive for properties along central corridors in or near commercial districts to increase density; solely residential buildings in those areas can be three stories high, but if development is built with commercial space on the first floor, the overall height can be increased to five stories. Providing such an incentive has the potential to increase both commercial space and residential destiny.

Mr. Revilak would like to see the flood plain drawn out on version two.

Ms. Ricker proposed the idea of an infrastructure impact fee, which could leverage new development to fix problems by requiring fees to pay for new infrastructure that needs to happen anyway.

Ms. Ricker would like to have conversations about where we can add greater density than three-family homes, especially to enable the inclusion of affordable housing.

Mr. Lau expressed an interest in seeing a mock-up of what a three-family house versus a six-family house looks like, so people can more easily see what these different areas might look like.

Ms. Ricker shared that we will be able to keep Utile on as consultants as we move forward with the process, particular the visualization.

The Chair moved on to **Agenda Item 2 – New Business**.

The Chair discussed the plans for upcoming Board meetings:

- A meeting is currently scheduled for May 22, but nothing is currently on the agenda, so it may be cancelled.
- The June meetings are currently scheduled for June 5 and 19. The June 19 meeting will be moved to June 26 due to the Juneteenth holiday.
- At one of the June meetings, Mike Ciampa and Doug Heim will be invited to give updates on projects that have been approved, and to have a discussion about the Atwood House.
- In June, the Board will also discuss the MOUs for the transfer of the properties currently owned by the Board.
- The public hearing for Calyx Peak at 251 Summer Street is currently scheduled for June 5.
- One of the June meetings should also include a review of the zoning articles proposed for the fall Town Meeting, to determine if the Board would like to change them in any way, and to plan for community engagement.

Mr. Revilak and Ms. Zsembery's terms on the Board will be expiring soon. Ms. Ricker will work with them to get their Board membership renewed.

Mr. Benson noted that the Board is behind on minutes. Ms. Ricker reported that DPCD has been using a transcription service due to being short-staffed. She will check on the progress of the minutes of prior meetings.

The Chair welcomed the Board's guest, Andrew Plumb, who is being considered for the open slot on the Board. He is a local architect, builder, and developer. He and his family have lived in Arlington for 20 years, and they have become more involved in Town government.

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn to Town Meeting. Mr. Revilak so moved, and Mr. Benson seconded. The board voted and approved unanimously.

The Meeting was **Adjourned** at 7:50 pm.