

From: Lisle Kulbach

Sent: Thursday, September 14, 2023 11:43 AM

To: Claire Ricker; Rachel Zsembery; Eugene Benson; Kin Lau; Stephen Revilak; Ashley Maher

Subject: Discussion of MBTA mandate plan

I am writing to the ARB with the hopes that you will take into account my questions and point of view. I have attended several of the meetings by zoom, gone to 2 office hours, and was at the meeting the other night, Sept. 12, 2023.

I will start with some of my questions.

How was the working committee formed?

Did they volunteer?

I see that some of them are architects and developers.

I am trying to see the situation from their point of view.'

I live one block away from Wildwood Ave. on Plymouth St. From the map of the current plan, all of Wildwood Ave on the side closest to Mass. Ave would be opened to development. One of my concerns is that there could possibly be new construction for years. Another concern is that some of Wildwood is on a hill. Has that been taken into account in terms of the height of new buildings? When I brought that question up at an office hours meeting I attended, the representative for the Working Committee replied that the committee had not reached that level yet. And yet, they are presenting this plan to the ARB. The plan is based on a map that does not even show elevations. I watched a zoom meeting where Kin Lau explained that on one side of Mass. Ave. in Arlington Heights the land is a very steep uphill. From the reaction of the Working Committee, it seemed to be something they had not thought about, and were not aware of.

As I understand it, Arlington is already in compliance with the mandate. Arlington could already get the money from the state even if it did nothing. Am I wrong? The committee keeps saying that there is a November deadline.

As far as publicity for this major building project, the working committee has proudly talked about their excellent outreach. But I can't agree with that. I did not find out about these plans until my precinct representative sent out an email. Did I see one sign in front of the Town Hall that mentioned this plan? How about the library? In a store? Or on a postcard. Last week I received a postcard.

As well, someone the other evening mentioned that when the committee did talk to people their outreach, they would ask general questions, such as, do you think there should be more equitable housing in Arlington? Most people would agree that there should be more equitable housing, but with no knowledges of the details, they are really not being included in the process or the outcome. I think the two meetings I attended in Town Hall show the frustration of town members who feel helpless about the implementation of the mandate. As well, I only found out after attending several meetings, that Arlington is already in compliance, which is why there never has been a map showing what minimum compliance would look like. Why did it take so long for that point to be made? From the working committee, I only hear the pros, why they support over compliance, but never the ground base from which to make an informed decision.

The committee also says that people can no longer afford to live in Arlington, the kind of people that once made up the bulk of the population. But then on the other hand, they committee does not really seem to be committed to the implementation of affordable housing. They are committed to uphold "by right". When I asked about that at a session I attended, I was told that affordable housing is not in the mandate.

Another point that people who approve of over compliance make, is that Arlington used to have more people. I knew people in Arlington in the 1970s. A family with 6 people lived in a single family house, 2 parents, 4 kids. I think that now, not so many people have that many kids, so fewer people are living in the houses. But I don't think Arlington had more houses at the time. The people that are making the point about how many people lived in Arlington in the 1970s are talking about population, but not about housing.

In an office hours meeting I attended, a woman on the working committee made the comment that the people that are against opening up Arlington to, at this point it seems like 3 times more building than mandated, "are the people with the loudest voices," ie, she didn't really need to listen to us because there were enough people that agreed with over compliance that it was just a matter of explaining her side of the issues. Since there has not been a real questionnaire to the whole town, with no real accurate information, it's really impossible to gauge where Arlington stands as a whole on this issue. The people that object to the current plan feel as if no one is really listening to them.

One man the other evening mentioned that if Arlington is really trying for a 0% carbon foot print, why aren't we saying that whatever is built should be "green". That would be of interest to me, and open my mind considerably to development.

There have been many complaints about the two buildings at the corner of Lockeland Ave and Mass Ave. When I mentioned those two buildings at an office hours, the fact that there is so little room between the buildings and the sidewalk, among other complaints, I was told that the plans for those buildings had been approved. Is that what we can expect in the future?

For more than a year, the house across the street from me has been in renovation. They seem to be doing a good job, but the trucks on the narrow street bringing in materials, and the noise of different equipment, has been ongoing and unpredictable. I've had to go inside sometimes when I wanted to sit outside, or garden, or talk on my phone, because it was too loud to think or be heard. If Wildwood Ave receives the go ahead to the "by right" injunction, 7 continuous blocks could simultaneously be experiencing tearing down and building.

Who would oversee the building process?
Who would approve the designs?

The developers of the building across my street wanted to install a second driveway. Many people that live on the street attended a zoom meeting where a discussion and points of view were aired. The discussion included the facts that the runoff from more asphalt on the downhill side of the house (where the driveway was projected to be) would cause flooding, the trees that the developer said were dead and therefore should be cut down, were not dead, a fire hydrant would have to be moved, and other points were made by the occupants of houses on the street. After several people had spoken, the developer backed down. Would there be that much oversight of each house on Wildwood Ave, or in Arlington in general? Who would have the time to follow each complaint?

I am open to new building in Arlington, but not at the level being considered.

Thank you for your time.
Elizabeth Kulbach, 21 Plymouth St.