

**From:** Susan M <susanmmortimer@hotmail.com>

**Sent:** Monday, September 11, 2023 3:24 PM

**To:** Rachel Zsembery <rzsembery@town.arlington.ma.us>; Eugene Benson; Kin Lau; Stephen Revilak; Ashley Maher

**Cc:** Claire Ricker; Jim Feeney; MBTA Communities; Eric Helmuth; Stephen DeCoursey; Len Diggins; John Hurd; Diane Mahon

**Subject:** The MBTA Communities Density Overlay Alternatives Before the ARB

I write today to restate my continuing concern regarding the MBTA Communities Working Group. I have written to the Working Group and attended several meetings. I am a working-class renter concerned for all working-class renters and home workers in my community. It is a community; NOT A MARKET. I have not seen my concerns ignored and unanswered. Thus, I feel compelled to continue to voice my concerns and bring them to the A.R.B. Going forward, my concerns will be shared with my Town Meeting Members as well.

Arlington is required to abide by the MBTA Communities Act. However, the Town's widely exaggerated interpretation troubles me as I see it as an escalation of Arlington's continued race to gentrify.

Tripling housing capacity will almost certainly entail razing more housing, to which the Town already assents in service to developers. I have witnessed neighbors testify against unchecked gentrification and seen how poorly they are treated. I have watched committees repeatedly ignore input, or worse, patronize concerned folks. Since the pandemic began Arlington has 'weaponized' Zoom to silence participants rather than using it to further participatory democracy.

Over the years I have attended multiple public forums where it is clear that the Town is going-through-the-motions and endeavoring to manufacture consent. There's much ado with slick promotional materials, paternalistic "listening sessions" and invitations to 'participate'. Dissent is ignored and Town Hall does as it pleases. (The same holds for the Human Rights, & Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commissions. They crush and assimilate concerns and complaints, while giving the appearance of 'listening' in response to outrage about police violence, racism and gentrification. As we have seen, the Commissions function as gatekeepers for Town Hall, NOT for the community, and work mightily to keep folks in line.)

Again, I am concerned about Arlington's embrace of gentrification and paternalistic responses to working class people and renters. I believe that the new zoning is a continuation of gentrification - which it hopes to achieve through exploiting the MBTA Communities Act. The Town's intended 'compliance' with this law is subterfuge and will only render Arlington less diverse that it already is.

The MBTA Working Group's plan is cover for unchecked gentrification. DISPLACEMENT is NOT an unintended consequence of gentrification. It is deliberate. Gentrification is racist and classist.

I urge the Arlington Redevelopment Board to take heed and to craft a more just plan. Thank you.

Yours truly,

*Susan Mortimer*

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