

From: Patricia Worden

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To: Rachel Zsebery; Kin Lau; Ashley Maher; Claire Ricker; Eugene Benson; Stephen Revilak; Eric Helmuth; Stephen DeCoursey; Diane Mahon; John Hurd; Jim Feeney

Subject: Testimony for ARB meeting of October 2, 2023

Worden Testimony for ARB meeting of October 2, 2023

Please Post with correspondence received

Dear members of the Arlington Redevelopment Board, Select Board, Mr. Feeney, and Ms. Richter,

Unfortunately many residents supporting the Working Group have been told (by high density proponents including a member of the ARB) and clearly believe that Arlington “severely restricted housing supply over the last 50 years” and needs to catch up with residential construction of apartments because (they claim) it followed an exclusionary zoning path since the Zoning Bylaw recodification of the seventies. That is NOT TRUE - Actually Arlington’s Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw-aka Affordable Housing Bylaw was one of the best and earliest such instruments of our region. Our subsidized Housing inventory is higher than most surrounding Towns and some cities.

Sadly, the current ARB and Planning Department are thought to have been remarkably careless recently about ensuring protocol for fair allocation, pricing, size etc. of some affordable units which would even make them ineligible for inclusion in the state’s Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). The WG Plan gives no information about safeguarding tenants’ interests against illegally high rents and unacceptably tiny apartments charged for affordable units by predatory developers, if indeed the WG plan ever even enables any affordable units to be provided by our by-law - Section 8.2 of Arlington Zoning Bylaw. There is NO certainty of affordable unit production by the WG Plan despite their misleading comments about affordable unit incentives etc.

Arlington is the second most dense Town in the Commonwealth and if nine or so of our surrounding Towns were built out to our density there would be no housing shortage in Massachusetts. The narrative promulgated by Arlington pro-density officials also claims that Arlington downsized their zoning to make it extremely difficult to build multi-family homes and that we were not a welcoming community. That is particularly inaccurate. For example, Arlington was one of the first and most important towns to include and warmly welcome METCO. Importantly, zoning was never used in Arlington to stop multifamily building. Just the opposite. In the early seventies there was concern that apartment builders were planning too many in East Arlington and so there was a construction moratorium for a short time. The moratorium enabled sufficient time for the zoning bylaw to be changed to encourage apartment buildings to be built in a manner enhancing the residential areas in many areas in Town. And, unlike most neighboring towns where few multifamily buildings were built, since the seventies many more apartments have been permitted and built—among the larger are:

- the Legacy in Arlington Centre
- Arlington 360 – the Symmes development
- Brightview Assisted Living Complex
- Watermill Place

- Brigham Square Apartments
- Collins project at the corner of Summer and Mill Streets
- Sunrise Assisted Living in Arlington Heights
- 882 Mass. Av
- Affordable Apartment Complexes built by the Housing Corporation of Arlington both in East Arlington and Arlington Heights
- Cusack Terrace, Housing Authority affordable complex, and
- Millbrook Square Affordable Apartments
- Apartments which were encouraged when gas stations shut down- such as the apartment building that replaced the Texaco gas station on Massachusetts Avenue in East Arlington.

Regarding disparaging comments about racial discrimination that that have been made by some officials and others trying to impugn Arlington's reputation it should be said that there will always be evil people in the world. Racial covenants were extremely rare in Arlington and a self-respecting attorney would refuse to handle a real estate deal unless a racial covenant was removed. Also, Arlington never had redlining -which in any event has little or nothing to do with zoning – mainly involved bankers.

According to the Planning Department a major initiative of the WG Plan is to implement several goals of the Master Plan to "address the lack of housing diversity in the community." The Master Plan involved thousands of hours of resident and expert involvement , was thoroughly vetted and then approved by Town Meeting. Very few Town Reports have been approved by Town Meeting

What Arlington's Master Plan actually states:

"Arlington is unique among Boston's inner suburbs for its diverse housing stock. "

So, Arlington 's Master Plan lauds the diversity of Arlington's housing. 61% of our housing stock is actually in 2 family or greater residential buildings. 39% is in single family housing. Some of the recent misinformation promoted by WG Plan proponents is that how the MBTA act will help to fill Arlington's so-called "Missing Middle."

In actuality, this supposedly Missing Middle, ranging from duplexes to 3 story low rise, is currently the predominant form of housing in Arlington.

In rough numbers,

Single Family 39%

Middle Housing 50%

Mid-Hi Rise apartment 11%

The WG Plan ignores the major housing recommendations of the Master Plan which specifies the need for senior housing and affordable housing-neither of which is part of the WG Plan.

The WG trashes the major recommendations of the Master Plan's sixteen pages of recommendations and preferences for care for Arlington's Historic and Cultural Resources. The MP is insistent that:

"Communities need to preserve the physical tapestry of historic buildings, structures, and landscapes for future generations. From Arlington's pivotal role in the events that precipitated the Revolutionary

War to the lasting physical creations showcasing masterful architectural styles, and the legacy of founding families such as the Robbins, Arlington has much to celebrate, and much to preserve from over three and a half centuries of development.”

Astoundingly the WG Plan Alternatives include plans for:

1. Enabling massive construction of apartment building and destruction ripping apart the quiet neighborhood hillside area of Paul Revere Road – the very road ridden by Paul Revere – and the area in which the historic and cherished home of Benjamin Locke – the Captain of the Minute Men at that time is now in danger of extinction if the ARB approves the WG Plan
2. Endangering area encompassing the Schwamb Mill – the oldest such working mill in the US and an invaluable Arlington cultural resource

We heard at the 9/11 hearing from a resident of a multifamily unit on Mass. Av. that she wishes others could acquire such units. Yes, right now Arlington has many naturally affordable units but if the WG’s plan for over-compliance is successful she may find that she no longer has her apartment-it will be demolished for gentrification. The new apartments enabled by the WG Plan will be much more expensive. I believe there was a demonstration last weekend by some residents of the large apartment buildings opposite the High School to object to possible eviction of long-term tenants—which will happen much more should the WG Plan be approved.

I have been involved in increasing affordable housing and preventing homelessness for many years. We have heard many wrongful claims and projections at the 9/11 ARB Hearing about the advantages that the current WG Plan for many thousands of new units if approved would bring affordable units, senior units and accessibility. Just remember that the WG has refused to require any of these and has not obtained state permission to use Arlington’s Affordable Housing Bylaw so they may **NEVER** happen if their plan is approved.

Sean Keane is an angel and posted the video of the Hearing on 9-11 very expeditiously (the ARB did allow some but not all anti-WG Plan speakers):

<https://youtu.be/5Tr8gl0l7p0?si=4sh2jGslqteXpq4F>

Here is the video for the Hearing on 7-25 in which more residents were allowed to speak:

<https://youtu.be/Q2LU6b59BHg>

Very truly yours,

Patricia B. Worden, Ph.D.

Former Chair, Arlington Housing Authority

Former Charter member Arlington Human Rights Commission