

**Arlington Redevelopment Board  
Monday, April 29, 2024, at 6:30 PM  
Community Center, Main Hall  
27 Maple Street, Arlington, MA 02476  
Meeting Minutes**

**PRESENT:** Rachel Zsembery (Chair), Eugene Benson, Kin Lau, Stephen Revilak

**STAFF:** Claire Ricker, Director of Planning and Community Development; Sarah Suarez, Assistant Director of Planning and Community Development

**ABSENT:** Shaina Korman-Houston

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The Chair called the meeting of the Board to order.

The Chair opened with **Agenda Item 1 – Review Meeting Minutes.**

April 1, 2024 – The Board members had no changes to the minutes. The Chair requested a motion to approve the April 1 minutes as submitted. Mr. Lau so moved, Mr. Benson seconded, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.

April 8, 2024 – The Board members had no changes to the minutes. The Chair requested a motion to approve the April 8 minutes as submitted. Mr. Lau so moved, Mr. Benson seconded, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 2 – Supplemental Board Report to Annual Town Meeting.**

Ms. Ricker explained that the supplemental report reflects an additional change that the Board wishes to make to the Zoning Bylaw in Article 28, which proposes deleting the Inland Wetland Overlay District. In addition to deleting Section 5.8, the Board wishes to delete “(2) Inland Wetland District” from the list of overlay districts in Section 4.1.2.

Mr. Benson moved to amend the discussion and content of the main motion of Article 28 and issue the Supplemental Report to the Town Moderator, Mr. Lau seconded, and the Board approved unanimously.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 3 – Public Hearing: Warrant Article for 2024 Special Town Meeting.**

The Chair opened the public hearings for Warrant Article 3 for 2024 Special Town Meeting.

**ARTICLE 3 – AMENDMENT OF ZONING MAP ADOPTING THE MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING OVERLAY DISTRICTS AND AMENDMENT OF ZONING BYLAW**

Ms. Ricker said that Article 3 was submitted for Special Town Meeting by the Board, at the recommendation of DPCD and Town Counsel. The Attorney General’s Office informed the Town that at the Fall 2023 Special Town Meeting, the vote on Article 12, the Multi-Family Housing Overlay Districts, did not properly include the zoning map. They have requested that Town Meeting hold a follow-up vote on the zoning map itself. The map has not changed from the map that Special Town Meeting saw in October 2023.

The Board members had no changes to the proposed language of Article 3. Mr. Benson said that the language of the amendment is consistent with what the Attorney General asked the Board to do. The Chair noted that this is a procedural item consistent with the discussion during Special Town Meeting in October 2023.

The Chair opened the floor for public comment.

- Wynelle Evans, 20 Orchard Place – She would like a clarification. Her understanding is that Article 12, approved by Special Town Meeting in October 2023, has not been approved by the AG’s Office, so she does not understand how we can amend an article that has not been approved.
- Amy Goldstein, 29 Albemarle Street, Precinct 14 – If the vote on in October 2023 was not done correctly, should it be redone, as opposed to just voting on the map?
- Mike Tarantino, B1 property owner – The B1 zoning is continuously overlooked.
- Mary Ruddy, 22 Bartlett Avenue – She is an abutter to the Neighborhood Multi-Family (NMF) Housing Overlay District, and she requests that the district be changed so that it does not continue so far down Bartlett Ave. In other places on the map, the NMF District only includes a few properties in from Mass Ave, but it includes eight buildings on Bartlett Ave, so it is encroaching on the purely residential area. It should only include about four buildings to be consistent.
- Ian Chin, 15 Walnut Street – He supports the redistricting. In some areas along Mass Ave, the Mass Ave/Broadway Multi-Family (MBMF) Housing Overlay District includes three parcels in from the main corridor, and in others, those parcels are being zoned as NMF, instead of MBMF.
- Hardeep Singh, 89 Everett Street – His parents own a house that falls in the Overlay District. They’re retired, and their only income is the rental income. For their property to be utilized under the Overlay District would require complete demolition, and there’s no way that’s going to happen while they own the property. This provides an opportunity for more developers to come in and build value for themselves, and it’s not going to benefit the general community.
- Amy Goldstein, 29 Albemarle Street, Precinct 14 – Precinct 14 has borne the brunt of this zoning change. The change goes in quite a ways up the side streets. People don’t know that this is happening. There have been public meetings, but many people who showed up at precinct meetings in the fall had no idea about it. It’s been rushed because of the fossil-fuel free pilot program. The Planning Office told her that the MBTA Communities law didn’t allow municipalities to require mixed-use, only incentivize it, but the AG’s Office changed that requirement, and the Board did not respond to that or make any changes once that was announced. This needs a more comprehensive look, and it should not be pushed through this fast.
- Grant Cook, 16 Wollaston Street, Precinct 16 – He attended most of the sessions about the MBTA Communities process. It’s a collection of compromises, some of them imperfect. It seems like this was a paperwork error, and it’s appropriate to fix it and move this forward. He is excited about what this is a precursor for, such as the work the Board will do in redistricting the Arlington Heights Business District, allowing those businesses to be made into a more cohesive area. He is also excited about the possibility of allowing more two- and three-family homes in more areas. If people don’t know about it, they will have the opportunity to learn about it as these changes continue to happen over the next year.

Michael Cunningham, Town Counsel, addressed the procedural questions. The Town cannot at this time make any changes to the Overlay Districts as presented to the Fall 2023 Special Town Meeting. Such changes can be proposed in the future. The problem that the Attorney General’s Office wants addressed is that the Fall 2023 Special Town Meeting did not actually vote to amend the zoning map, as listed in Section 4 of the Zoning Bylaw. That’s the only thing happening now. Nothing can be added to or subtracted from the Overlay Districts. The AG’s Office has expressed no reservations about what Special Town Meeting did vote for in October 2023, and all we need to do now is make sure that the zoning map is properly amended. The entire process does not need to be redone, and if the AG’s Office had other issues, they would have highlighted those. The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) has already determined that the Multi-Family Housing Overlay Districts are in compliance with M.G.L c.40 §3A, and the AG’s Office is reviewing it for form and compliance with state law.

The Chair said that there was previously a significant amount of discussion about how to spread the Overlay Districts across the different areas of town, working with Town officials, the Working Group, and residents who attended the many public meetings. There was representation across the different feeder schools and different areas in town.

Mr. Revilak said that the Overlay Districts focus on two main corridors, Mass Ave and Broadway. The zoning allows for higher buildings along those two streets, in the MBMF District, tapering down a bit behind them in the NMF District, and then tapering further to the existing typically 2½-story zoning in the neighborhoods behind that. It was the Board's intention not to include any Business District properties. In the future, they would like to perform a comprehensive look at the three main business districts – the Heights, the Center, and Capitol Square. The Heights will be addressed first, some time in 2025. With regard to question about the B1 districts, they're not being ignored, but the Board hasn't gotten to them yet. East Arlington does not include any MBMF properties on Mass Ave, because the Board intends to comprehensively look at and possibly rezone those properties in the future, and they did not want to rezone them now and then tell property owners they were being rezoned again in a few years. There was some back and forth about the properties being included in East Arlington, given that it includes both major corridors. Early on, there was a sense that the Overlay Districts were too heavily concentrated in East Arlington, so some of that was reduced.

The Chair invited anyone interested in rezoning B1 or other districts in the future to reach out to the Board or to DPCD to get those issues on the agenda at a future Board meeting.

Mr. Revilak said that the MBTA Communities mandate from the state was an attempt to address the housing shortage in Massachusetts by dealing with some of the restrictions on how housing is built in many different communities. Taking advantage of the bylaw changes for many properties would require significant redevelopment or renovation for many owners. No property owner is required to make any changes to their property because of the changes to the Zoning Bylaw. The changes will happen over time as properties turn over and are redeveloped.

The Chair re-opened the floor for public comment.

- Hardeep Singh, 89 Everett Street – He followed along with this process. One idea that never gained traction was the idea of changing the zoning of the whole town. It has gotten more difficult to acquire property in Arlington, and things are continuing to get more expensive. There are no opportunities for truly equitable development. It would make more sense to analyze all lots in town and open up the largest lots to increase the number of units.
- Joe Lapotta, 483 Summer Street – He rents a unit in a multi-family building. He moved here recently and even with a six-figure salary, his rent is barely affordable. There needs to be more competition in the rental market, and it makes sense to put multi-family housing near bus lines.
- Mike Tarantino, B1 property owner – He asked if it was possible that an early version of the map included B1 properties. The Board replied that they were never included.
- Mindy Garver, 213 Broadway – This has unleashed every single developer in the state of Massachusetts on homeowners. She plans to live in her house as it is. She wishes there were a way to stop developers from bothering her. Changing the zoning is fine, but since she's allowed to keep her house as it is for as long as she owns it, she doesn't want to be deluged by developers, which has been an unintended consequence of the process.

The Chair closed public comment on Article 3.

Mr. Benson said that the Board ultimately decided to put the Multi-Family Housing Overlay Districts on the main corridors, near bus lines, near businesses and other amenities, with the hope that more people would be able to walk more places and spend less time in cars. In addition, under the rules that the state imposed, they could not engage in spot-zoning and rezone individual large parcels. The new districts had to be large, contiguous districts.

He reiterated that the AG's Office said that the zoning amendment as passed in October 2023 was fine and does not need to be changed; Town Meeting just needs to vote on the zoning map, because that vote was not properly attached to the change in the Zoning Bylaw, which is already done.

Mr. Cunningham said that Mr. Benson was correct. The AG's Office has not actually approved the changes to the Zoning Bylaw, but they are deferring to EOHLC, which has approved it. The only problem the AG's Office cited was the failure to officially amend the map.

The Chair closed discussion of Article 3.

The Chair asked for a motion to recommend Favorable Action on Article 3. Mr. Lau so moved, Mr. Benson seconded, and the Board voted unanimously.

The Chair said that the Board Report to Special Town Meeting, including the vote just taken, will be posted on Thursday, May 2, with the agenda for the Board's next meeting on Monday, May 6, 2024. At that meeting, the Board will review, discuss, and approve the Report, which will then be presented to Special Town Meeting on Wednesday, May 8, 2024.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 4 – New Business.**

Ms. Ricker said that she and David Morgan, Conservation Agent, wrote a memo regarding Article 28, the deletion of the Inland Wetland District, which has been attached to the Annotated Town Warrant. The Board members expressed their appreciation for the detail included in the memo.

The Chair said that the Board is planning either a June or September joint meeting with the Select Board regarding parking. Ms. Ricker said that will contact the Select Board Administrator to determine whether a June date is possible.

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

Meeting **Adjourned to Town Meeting at 7:10 pm.**