TOWN OF ARLINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING and
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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MEMORANDUM

To: Mike Ciampa, Inspectional Services
From: Claire Ricker, Director, Planning and Community Development
Date: January 27, 2025
RE: Cambridge Center for Chinese Culture, 30 Mystic Street, Arlington, MA

The Cambridge Center for Chinese Culture (the applicant) plans to redevelop the existing building at 30 Mystic Street for a variety of uses. The applicant proposes to renovate the interior of an existing two-story, vacant commercial building with off-street parking located at 30 Mystic Street, Arlington, MA, in the B3 Village Business District. The applicant proposes to establish a mixed-use building with nonprofit services, including a language school, childcare center, and adult day care.

On January 27, 2025, Inspectional Services determined that two of the three proposed uses meet the requirement for a zoning exemption under Chapter 40A, Section 3. Section 3 (the Dover Amendment) provides certain protections under the Zoning Act and the Arlington Zoning Bylaw, namely that the Town may only apply reasonable regulations concerning the bulk and height of structures and in determining yard sizes, lot area, setbacks, open space, parking, and building coverage requirements. The Town has the burden of applying only those regulations which serve a legitimate municipal concern. This memo outlines the justification for an administrative review of the two proposed uses that meet the requirement for a zoning exemption.

Bulk and Height: The proposal will not alter the bulk and height of the existing structure at 30 Mystic Street.

Yard Sizes and Setbacks: The B3 Zoning District does not require a front yard setback or a side yard setback for mixed-use buildings. The rear yard varies depending on the height and length of the structure. There are no additions planned for the building.

Lot Area: The minimum lot area requirement for a structure of this size in the B3 Zoning District is 20,000 square feet. The building in which the Cambridge Center for Chinese Culture is leasing space has a lot area of 37,089 square feet.

Open Space: The proposal does not alter the usable or landscaped open space on the property.

Parking:

Vehicle Parking Requirements for Adult Day Care*		
Required parking spaces	80	
Proposed parking spaces	76	
Loading Requirements		
Required loading spaces	1	
Proposed loading spaces	1	
**20 employees per shift; 4 spaces per practitioner required*		
Bicycle Parking Requirements		
Use	**Long-Term Parking**	**Short-Term Parking**
Office	1	1
Non-exempt educational	4	20
Total Required Bicycle Parking	5	21
Total Proposed Bicycle Parking	18	26

The table above shows the parking calculations for the adult day care only; other proposed uses are exempt under M.G.L. c. 40A, §3. The applicant does not have sufficient parking and would need to seek a parking reduction as either a mixed-use development or in compliance with §6.1.5.C of the Zoning Bylaw – Transportation Demand Management.

Building Coverage: There is no building coverage requirement for this use in the B3 Zoning District. The proposal does not change the existing building coverage.

Signage

The property is in the B3 Zoning District, which is in the Business Sign District. The applicant proposes to retain the monument sign in front of the building on Mystic Street.

Conclusion

Based on the review outlined in this memorandum, it appears that an administrative review is appropriate for the two Dover protected uses while further review is necessary under the Zoning Bylaw. It appears that imposing the requirements of the Zoning Bylaw related to bulk and height, yard sizes and setbacks, lot area, open space, parking, and building coverage applicable to the Dover uses would not serve a legitimate municipal purpose in this case. The proposal does not meet the minimum parking requirements for the non-Dover use but the availability of a nearby public parking lot, nearby bus routes, provision of van service, and proximity to the Minuteman Bikeway can reduce the parking needs of those accessing the language school, childcare center, and adult day care. Finally, the proposed signage is in keeping with the scale and aesthetic of other signage in the neighborhood. As such, further review under Section 3.4 of the Zoning Bylaw is only necessary for the adult day-care use.

From: Michael Ciampa <mciampa@town.arlington.ma.us>
Sent: Monday, January 27, 2025 2:44 PM
To: Claire Ricker <cricker@town.arlington.ma.us>
Subject: 30 Mystic Street

Hi Claire,

I just wanted to follow up on our previous conversations about the proposed uses for 30 Mystic Street. Child care is protected by the Dover Amendment, and the proposed language school is also protected because it is educational. However, the Dover Amendment does not protect adult daycare unless the services provided are primarily educational. Our office has not been provided with any information that would allow us to designate this service as educational. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks
Mike

Michael Ciampa
Director of Inspectional Services
Town of Arlington
781-316-3386

Arlington values equity, diversity, and inclusion. We are committed to building a community where everyone is heard, respected, and protected.