

Arlington Redevelopment Board
Monday, September 15, 2025, at 7:30 PM
Community Center, Main Hall
27 Maple Street, Arlington, MA 02476
Meeting Minutes

This meeting was recorded by ACMI.

PRESENT: Rachel Zsembery (Chair), Shaina Korman-Houston, Kin Lau, Stephen Revilak

ABSENT: Eugene Benson

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

The Chair called the meeting of the Board to order.

The Chair opened with **Agenda Item 1 – Public Hearing: Docket #3867, 9-11 Robbins Road.**

Ms. Ricker explained that the applicant requested a continuation of the hearing to November 3, 2025, because they are redoing the plans.

The Chair asked for a motion to continue the hearing for Docket #3867, 9-11 Robbins Road, to November 3, 2025. Mr. Lau so moved, Mr. Revilak seconded, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 2 – Update on Special Permits for 455 Mass Ave and 882-892 Mass Ave.**

Ms. Ricker explained that on August 5, 2025, the Board sent a letter to the 882-892 Mass Ave developer enumerating all the conditions of the Special Permit which have not been met, as well as other issues the Board has with the development. Attorney Corinne Doherty, the attorney representing the developer, sent a response dated August 28, 2025, which has been shared with the Board.

Mr. Lau asked about the provision of open space; he noted that Ms. Doherty's letter indicated that because the building was relocated seven feet back from its planned location, they were not able to include the amount of open space originally planned. Ms. Doherty said that the project does have open space, but not as much as intended. One of the amenities originally planned was an outdoor gas grill, but grills must be at least 10 feet from the main structure, which is not possible with the reduced size of the open space, so the development's insurance company will not allow it. They originally included a picnic table in the open space, but the first-floor residents complained that it was too close to their windows. They would be open to including other outdoor amenities that would fit in the reduced space. Mr. Lau noted that when the Board sets a condition for approval, the developer cannot choose to ignore it because something else about the project changes. If the developer realizes that the original plans will not work and the original Special Permit conditions cannot be met, the Board will be willing to work with them to modify the Special Permit, but the developer cannot simply ignore some of the conditions.

Mr. Lau expressed frustration that the developer has agreed to repaint the storefront, but they have not actually done so. Ms. Doherty said that the developer has submitted the possible colors for use on the storefront, and as soon as the Board approves one of the colors, the storefront will be painted within a couple of weeks. She said that the original renderings only had generic colors, but not specific paint choices. Mr. Lau said that it is difficult to assess the colors on the image attached to the letter, and he would like to see actual swatches. Ms. Doherty said that the developer submitted swatches, but both the Board members and DPCD staff said they have not seen/received them. The Chair asked that the developer send the physical swatches to DPCD, and that DPCD forward them to the Board. She said that as soon as the Board sees them, they will make a decision.

Mr. Lau said that the Board was never told that the compressor would be mounted on the side of the building. Ms. Doherty said that the compressor needed to be relocated to the outside of the building, because the square footage of the building was reduced when it had to be moved, and the only possible locations were the roof, which would not have been able to effectively cool the retail space, or the side of the building.

Ms. Doherty said that these all issues resulted from the fact that the developer initially submitted plans to the Board, which granted a Special Permit with conditions, and then later submitted construction plans to the Inspectional Services Department, without realizing that they needed to go back to the Board to discuss changes between the two sets of plans.

Mr. Lau said that the location of the compressor potentially raises ADA issues, because it sticks out more than 4 inches and overlaps the sidewalk. Also, it is close to the property line, meaning that it will blow onto the adjacent property, which could be considered a nuisance. The zoning bylaw also limits the level of sound that can be heard from neighboring properties. The Chair noted that the applicant provided a photograph of a grate that could be installed to minimize the view of the compressor. It improves the look, but does not solve the issue of the overhang over the sidewalk. Mr. Lau said that he cannot tell if the grate redirects the air so it does not go directly across to the adjacent property. He asked that the developer look into whether the location of the compressor is an ADA violation, and that they propose a solution that will both direct air away from the neighboring property and minimize the noise to acceptable levels.

Mr. Lau said that he would also like the developer to propose a method of creating additional open space. He would like to see some amenities in that space, which may necessitate installing some kind of screen to shield the first-floor residential unit.

Mr. Lau said that the foundation under the storefront windows looks like it has never been finished; it is exposed concrete block, which is not waterproof. Ms. Doherty noted that that particular issue was not included in the letter, but she will raise it with the developer.

Mr. Lau also said that some of the trim and fascia were re-painted at the Board's request, but now the paint is chipping and peeling. The Chair noted that when they spoke with developer John Murphy and he agreed to repaint the trim, he assured them that the correct paint application would be used to ensure strong adherence, and it would be a like-new application. Ms. Doherty replied that the developer will have all the trim repainted when they repaint the storefront.

Mr. Lau said that the lighting plan submitted by the developer shows the outline of the building, but it does not show exactly where the parking lot or property lines are. The Board wants to see a lighting plan that clearly shows the location of the parking lot with striping, the property lines, and the fence, and which shows how lights are aimed. Currently, some of them shine up into the air and onto neighboring property, rather than directly on the parking lot. Ms. Doherty said that she would ask Zade Engineering, who created the lighting plan, to submit a new lighting plan showing all the information requested. She would also ask Mr. Murphy to go to the site and look at all the lights to make sure they're installed and aimed properly.

Ms. Korman-Houston asked what happened between the granting of the Special Permit and the beginning of construction that required that the building be moved back seven feet. Ms. Doherty said that she was not involved with the project at that time. Her understanding is that when construction plans were submitted, they were not approved, and the developer was required to move the building back in order to create a larger sidewalk. She is not sure who required the larger sidewalk. She said that it is not unusual for a project to significantly change over the course of the approvals process. The Chair said that the Board did not grant relief from providing usable open space, meaning that the open space requirements were in effect. Ms. Korman-Houston expressed concern that the developer would move forward on a plan different from what the Board approved without coming back to the Board to discuss it.

Mr. Revilak said that although he was not on the Board at the time the Special Permit was approved, he did attend the hearings. His recollection is that the Board asked that the building be moved back, and the issue was discussed at the Board meeting on July 20, 2020. The Chair noted that even if the Board approved changing the plans, they did not approve an elimination of usable open space.

Mr. Revilak said that he appreciates the changes that have been made to the bicycle parking, and he is okay with the proposed grate to cover the compressor.

The Chair asked Ms. Ricker when the tenant of 882 Mass Ave is scheduled to come before the Board with an application for a sign and for window coverings. Ms. Ricker replied that they are scheduled on October 6, 2025.

The Chair summarized the follow-up actions the Board has requested:

- Submit swatches of the three potential bronze paint colors for the storefront to the Board through DPCD.
- Identify how they intend to address the exposed foundation underneath the storefront framing.
- Determine if the projection of the compressor over the sidewalk poses an issue with ADA compliance.
- Determine how air flow and sound concerns will be mitigated, given the compressor's proximity to the adjacent property.
- Update the lighting plan to show site details and indicate how the lights are aimed and the effect on adjacent properties.
- Create a plan for the existing usable open space.

The Chair asked Ms. Ricker if she has any information about 455 Mass Ave. She said that the Board has discussed the project and has expressed concern about a number of issues, but they have not yet compiled those issues into a letter as with 882-892 Mass Ave. The same developer is working on both 455 Mass Ave and 882-892 Mass Ave, so the Chair addressed Ms. Doherty about the 455 Mass Ave project as well. She asked Ms. Doherty to let the developer know that if they have made any changes to the plans that are not what the Board approved, they need to come back to the Board to address them. Ms. Doherty said the developer has received approval from the Historical Commission for all the final exterior materials, and they hope that the Redevelopment Board will also approve them. She has advised the developer to make a list of all the conditions included in the Special Permit and to demonstrate that they have been met before the final inspection takes place and the Certificate of Occupancy is issued. The Chair noted that the façade as constructed is not in alignment with what was approved in the Special Permit, including the fenestration and the brick color. Mr. Lau noted that the Historical Commission has no authority over the Redevelopment Board, so the Historical Commission cannot overrule conditions made by the Redevelopment Board.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 3 – Open Forum.**

The Chair opened the floor for open forum. Seeing no one who wished to speak, she closed open forum.

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

Ms. Ricker said that the second major public event for the Comprehensive Plan update will be held on October 30, 2025, in Arlington High School's cafeteria. The committee working on the Comprehensive Plan is conducting activities with focus groups related to specific topics, including housing, transportation, historic and cultural resources, land use, and other topics. She would like to give a presentation to the Board about the work that has been done on land use at one of their upcoming meetings.

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Lau so moved, and Ms. Korman-Houston seconded. The Board voted and approved unanimously.

Meeting **Adjourned** at 8:15 pm.

Documents used:

Agenda Item 2 Letter from 882-892 Mass Ave LLC 8-28-25
 882 Mass Ave Lighting Plan 9-8-25

Correspondence 882 Mass Ave - Gersh, J - 9/13/2025
 multiple projects - Seltzer, D - 9/13/2025