

**Arlington Redevelopment Board**  
**Monday, September 9, 2024, 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), Eugene Benson, Shaina Korman-Houston, Kin Lau, Stephen Revilak

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

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The Chair called the meeting of the Board to order.

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

August 5, 2024, minutes – The Board members had no changes to the minutes. The Chair requested a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Lau so moved, Mr. Benson seconded, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 2 – Public Hearing: Docket #3816, 5-7 Belknap Street.**

Ms. Ricker explained that the application is for Site Plan Review for a property at 5-7 Belknap Street, in the Neighborhood Multi-Family Overlay District. This is the Board’s first hearing for Site Plan Review. The proposal is to demolish an existing two-family house and garage and construct a four-unit multi-family development comprised of two front-to-back buildings connected by a courtyard, each containing two townhouse-style units. The proposal also includes a driveway with four parking spaces, each with its own EV charger, and a shed for bicycle storage.

The applicant was represented by Brian McGrail, attorney representing 5-7 Belknap Street LLC, Michael Collins, 5-7 Belknap Street LLC manager, Brigitte Steines, architect, and Paul Pinocchio, site engineer. Mr. McGrail noted that the Multi-Family Housing Overlay Districts were recently enacted by the Town of Arlington. The property is located within one of those districts, the Neighborhood Multi-Family Housing Overlay District, so the project is allowed as of right, with no requirement for a Special Permit, requiring only Site Plan Review.

Ms. Steines presented the details of the project. She noted that the footprint of the proposed buildings was not significantly larger than the footprint of the existing house and garage. The proposed four units are in two separate buildings, with one behind the other, so the massing on Belknap Street is not overly large, and there is space and light between the buildings. The driveway is set up so that each unit has a parking space with an EV charger. The required setback on the left side of the property is 5 feet, but their plans include a 7-foot setback. After outreach and multiple meetings with neighbors, the original plans were changed to protect the privacy of the immediate neighbors by moving the rear building forward somewhat. Bicycle parking and storage for trash and recycling are provided. The color palette is prevalent in the neighborhood. The neighborhood includes a variety of building styles, including both flat and gabled fronts. The proposed building is not a monolithic flat surface, but includes balconies and a wide porch enabling connection to passersby on the street. The front setback is smaller than the brick building to the right but comparable with the building to the left. The building includes roof decks, which are oriented toward Belknap Street, to provide additional privacy for the rear neighbors. The roofs include a significant amount of empty space, which will be solar ready and include space heat pump inverters, since the buildings are entirely electric. The footprint and height are below what is allowable. They are not asking for any relief from the zoning bylaws. External lights are all soft lights pointing downward. They are including as much sustainable material as they can, and they are matching the clapboard look of the rest of the neighborhood.

Mr. Revilak asked about bicycle parking. He asked if the bikes can be wheeled into place in the bike shed, or if the storage is upright. Ms. Steines said that it is upright to be maximize the use of the space, but the details are not finalized.

The space will be tall enough to stand up in, and it will include lighting. Mr. Revilak asked if bicycle charging will be available. Ms. Steines responded that they have not yet considered it, but it can be included.

Mr. Benson asked about plans for snow removal. Ms. Steines responded that snow would have to be moved to the side strip or the back. Mr. Benson expressed concern that snow would be pushed onto a walkway or the street, and he asked how it would be clarified where snow can safely be put. Ms. Steines replied that it would have to be worked out in regulations about where snow can be moved, as in any dense area. Mr. McGrail said that he was worked on projects in which snow must be entirely removed from the site when it reaches a certain depth.

Mr. Benson also asked what type of plantings would be placed along the right side edge of the property. Ms. Steines replied that they would be low, easy to maintain plantings, probably no taller than 18 inches. Mr. Benson replied that he thought that the vegetated buffer should be higher. Ms. Steines replied that they could consider something higher, but that might be less sustainable in close proximity to parking. The proposed driveway will be in the same place as the current driveway, which has no buffer between it and the neighboring building. Higher plants are proposed for the buffer on the side without the driveway.

Mr. Benson also asked for clarification about whether there would be railings on the side of the roof as there are on the front. Ms. Steines replied that the mechanical areas do not have railings, but the roof decks do, and they will be 42 inches high.

Ms. Korman-Houston noted that the application states that the impervious square footage will be reduced from the current site, but she doesn't understand how that is possible based on the drawings and maps. Ms. Steines replied that the current driveway covers a large area and is entirely asphalt, but the proposed driveway will be partially pervious, made out of a rubber material with pea gravel.

Ms. Korman-Houston asked if the rear patios were shared or for private use by individual units. Ms. Steines said that the back yard is for the use of the two units in the rear building, the front yard is for the use of the two units in the front building, and the connecting porch is for common use. The four roof decks are private, for each individual unit.

Ms. Korman-Houston asked about solar. Ms. Steines said that they did a full study, which they submitted, to look at how much power would be needed to power the units, and the units are fully solar ready, should the future owners wish to install it.

Mr. Lau asked if any lighting is provided along the driveway. Ms. Steines said that they have not considered that, but they could add small lights along the lower level of the exterior of the building which would shine down on the walkway along the building, next to the driveway.

Mr. Lau asked about the porch and patio. Ms. Steines said that the center patio is solid and filled in, and the front and back porches are traditional wood construction on a foundation. Mr. Lau noted that if the front and back porches will not have roofs over them, they can be counted as pervious.

Mr. Lau asked if the units would be condominiums or rentals. Mr. McGrail replied that they will be condos. Mr. Lau noted that there will need to be a condo agreement that would cover snow removal, trash removal, etc.

The Chair said that she was disappointed not to see trim around the windows and at the corners, to make it fit in better with the more traditional houses on the street. She noted that Mr. Collins' portfolio included an example of similarly modern architecture that she thinks would fit in better with the architecture on the street because it includes trim around the larger openings and at the corners.

The Chair opened the floor for public comment:

- Wynelle Evans, Orchard Place – She thinks that Mr. Collins has done some of the better-looking recent developments in Arlington, but she is disappointed in this design, because she does not think that it respects its surroundings. She would like to see a design that fits into the street a little more thoughtfully.
- Jenny Toole, 9 Belknap Street – She lives in the house at the rear of the driveway of the property immediately abutting 5-7 Belknap Street, along with her husband and two young children. She appreciates the fact that Mr. Collins and Ms. Steines have worked with her and other neighbors and have altered the design based on their

feedback. This is the first development in Arlington under the MBTA Communities Act. The MBTA Communities Act website says that its intention is to help resolve the housing crisis in Massachusetts. Over the course of the past four years, three of the fourteen properties on Belknap Street have been purchased by developers, which has been disruptive to the neighborhood. The new houses were sold for between \$1 and \$1.7 million, so they have contributed to rising housing costs and have not helped with the affordability crisis for families and children. The MBTA Communities Act requires that the housing created is suitable for families with children. The mortgage for a \$1.7 million house would be about \$10,000 per month, which is not feasible for most families with children. The proposed development of multi-million-dollar condos at 5-7 Belknap doesn't align with the spirit of the MBTA Communities Act, especially considering the extremely small yards, roof decks, and balconies. She would like the Board to carefully consider the impact of this development on this very small street and neighborhood.

- Carl Wagner, 30 Edgehill Road, Precinct 15 Town Meeting Member – This meeting should have proper microphones and speaker systems. The Town of Arlington should have hybrid meetings. The look of the building is terrible, and he would not want to live near it. The proposed building will cast a lot of shadow and is getting rid of open space and permeable land. It is taking advantage of Arlington. If residents go to Town Meeting Members, they can change the law to make development not so aggressive. This project should be held to the letter of the law as much as possible. The MBTA Communities Act took away a lot of the Board's power to restrict this type of development. It is also anti-affordability; these units will cost more than what was there before. If the Board doesn't want to see Town Meeting go backwards, he asks that they use the power they have to restrict this project from things like putting a balcony 10 feet away from a child's bedroom.
- Peter Bermudas, 19 Belknap Road – He appreciates the fact that Mr. Collins engaged the neighbors and made an effort to address their concerns. It looks to him like the building height is 33.5 feet, but that does not include the four stairway bump-outs, and he would like to know if those should be included in the building height as well. He is also concerned about the fact that the building's shadows might impact solar projects on nearby houses, even as Arlington is committed to increasing the use of renewable energy. 13-15 Belknap Street is a two-year-old development with three of four units vacant because of serious structural problems in the building. He asked if Arlington's Inspectional Services has more capacity than it did at the time and will be able to provide the oversight necessary for this project and others in the coming years in order to prevent more of the type of problems facing 13-15 Belknap. The development team suggests that the development will increase the value of neighboring homes, but 9 Belknap Street will now be dwarfed and often in the shadow of the new building.
- Ratnakar Vellanki, 21 Adams Street – He thinks that the fact that a property that currently has two units will soon have four units is great news. The Federal Reserve Bank, in its most recent white paper, clearly said that increasing the supply of housing creates mobility and reduces prices. He noted that for as of right uses, Site Plan Review is limited to imposing certain narrow terms and conditions and cannot result in denial. That narrow scope was clearly laid out in Article 12, which was passed by Special Town Meeting in October 2023, and it is limited to Section 3.4.4 of the zoning bylaw. He would urge that the Board limit their questions to that narrow scope. Section 3.4.4 clearly states Environmental Design Review (EDR) is only applicable in two cases: situations requiring both a Special Permit AND a Building Permit, which is not the case here as no Special Permit is required, or proposals that alter the façade in a manner that affects the architectural integrity of the structure AND are for one of the uses listed in subparagraphs a through i, none of which apply in this case. Therefore EDR does not apply in this case.
- Daniel Green, 40 Irving Street – He would like to understand the Board's interpretation of the bylaw in terms of the framework for handling Site Plan Review applications, given that this is the first.
- Susan Stamps, 39 Grafton Street – It is exciting that Arlington has its first MBTA Communities project, but she is surprised at the design of the building. She is disappointed that it is a super-modern, square design, amid more traditional buildings on that street. The Site Plan Review application says, "Proposed development shall be related harmoniously to the terrain and to the use, scale, and architecture of existing buildings in the vicinity that have functional or visual relationship to the proposed buildings." The proposed building looks completely different from all the neighboring buildings, and she would like to see a visual design that makes it look more traditional, like the rest of the buildings on the street, as developers have done elsewhere in Town.

- Peter Bloom, Jason Terrace – He likes the architecture on Belknap Street, and he has always been disturbed by the design of the brick building plopped into the middle of that neighborhood with more traditional architecture. If that building’s design has been used as a justification for the type of design this application includes, that will make it more likely that future such buildings will follow. For the sake of the neighborhood’s architectural heritage, he hopes that does not happen.

Seeing no one else who wished to speak, the Chair closed public comment.

Mr. Revilak said that he understands that the applicants are trying to maximize space, but it would be preferable to have bicycle parking that would allow bicycles to be wheeled in, and not then have to be lifted up.

Mr. Benson noted that under Site Plan Review, the Board cannot deny the application, as long as the project meets the zoning bylaw requirements. This is different from a Special Permit, in which the Board has more authority. This development is as of right, which was required by the MBTA Communities Law. The zoning bylaw gives the Board the authority to do Site Plan Review, which allows them to place reasonable conditions on the application, but not to say no entirely. He thinks that there is one area in which this proposal does not meet the zoning bylaw requirements: side yards used for parking are required to have a visual buffer, and low plantings are not sufficient. His other concern is the lack of privacy of the roof decks, both for residents and for neighbors. He wondered if it would make sense to require some sort of screening as part of the roof deck railings. He also noted that adherence to the Town’s Residential Design Guidelines is a requirement that the Board is allowed to impose, which is relevant to the Chair’s earlier comment about wanting to see trim around the windows.

Ms. Korman-Houston noted that roof bump-outs are not generally included in calculations about the overall height of the building. She also responded to Mr. Benson’s comment about screening the roof decks; it would increase privacy, but it would also increase the appearance of the building’s height, making it appear that the height difference with neighboring houses is even larger. She also expressed concerns about the driveway, which seems very narrow. They are trying to fit a lot of cars into a small space.

Mr. Lau agreed with Mr. Benson that the plans should include some sort of screening between the driveway and the neighbors to the right, possibly a fence. He does not think that screening is necessary for the roof deck. Snow removal plans should be part of the condo agreement. He agreed with the Chair about adding trim around the windows.

The Chair noted that the Board has three options: to vote to approve the project as is, to vote to approve the project with conditions, or to vote not to approve the project on the basis that it does not meet the zoning bylaw requirements. They cannot vote to continue the hearing and ask that the applicant return.

Mr. Benson noted that the zoning bylaw requires a vegetated buffer next to parking, not a fence.

Mr. Revilak agreed with the Chair about including trim around the windows, as shown in other examples in Mr. Collins’ portfolio.

Mr. Revilak noted that the Zoning Board of Appeal’s interpretation of the requirement for a vegetated buffer next to parking is that it must be at least a foot wide, preferably 18 inches. Mr. Benson noted that the purpose of that requirement (in Section 6.1.10.A) is to “minimize visual impacts”; no specific height is listed, but it must be tall enough to provide a visual barrier. The Chair’s concern is that because the height is not specified in the zoning bylaw, placing a specific condition on the height would likely be inconsistent with how it is interpreted by other boards and departments, particularly because the Redevelopment Board does not usually review residential projects. Mr. Benson said that requiring a specific height would set a precedent for future projects subject to Site Plan Review.

The Chair note that the Board has suggested several possible conditions, including bicycle parking that does not require the bicycles to be lifted, adequate snow removal measures for the property, and architectural trim around the windows and on the corners of the buildings. She asked if the applicants would be willing to meet those conditions, and Mr. Collins replied that they would be.

The Chair said that the Board needs to decide if it also wants to include a condition requiring a taller vegetated buffer next to the parking. She said that she is fine with the lower vegetation as proposed, especially because a taller buffer, whether a fence or vegetation, will make it difficult to get in and out of cars parked along it, and because the zoning

bylaw does specify height. Mr. Collins asked if a vegetated buffer would have to be continuous, or if they could plant multiple four- or five-foot tall plants with gaps between them, enabling people to get in and out of cars in the gaps, while also providing something of a visual buffer. Mr. Benson said that the zoning bylaw does not specifically answer that question. Ms. Steines said that she initially wanted the buffer beside the parking to be a continuous four-foot-high hedge, but their landscape architect said that when such a hedge is built next to parking, car doors end up damaging the plants. She does not want to include plants that are likely to be damaged and end up looking terrible. Their plan is to plant taller plants in the sections of the buffer where there is no parking and lower plants next to the designated parking spaces. Mr. Benson suggested including taller plants at the points between each of the parking spaces. Mr. Lau said that the Board can't require that because the zoning bylaw doesn't require it. He doesn't want to set a precedent that something is going to be required that's not in the zoning bylaw. The Chair said that the Board can work with an applicant to come up with a solution to particular issues even if that solution is not required by the zoning bylaw. Mr. Revilak noted that this is a vague section of the bylaw, and ideally it will be clarified at some future point.

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the Docket 3816 Site Plan Review application with the following conditions:

- That the applicant create a snow removal plan as part of the condo documents.
- That the applicant review the Residential Design Guidelines and add trim around window openings and on the corners of the building.
- That the applicant consider bicycle parking that does not require that bicycles be lifted for storage.
- That the applicant raise the height of the vegetated buffer in the twelve-inch-wide planting strip to the right of the parking spaces, to the extent possible.
- That the project comply with site lighting requirements for the Town of Arlington.

Mr. Benson suggested that the Board ask the applicant to return to a future meeting and present revised plans. The Chair said that the Board can ask the applicant to update DPCD with their revised plans, but that asking them to return to a future Board meeting defeats the purpose of having an as of right development under Site Plan Review. Ms. Korman-Houston, Mr. Revilak, and Mr. Lau agreed that administrative approval for changes would be appropriate.

Mr. Lau moved to approve the Docket with the above conditions, and Mr. Revilak seconded. The Board voted unanimously in favor.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 3 – Public Hearing: Docket #3633, 1500 Massachusetts Avenue.**

Ms. Ricker stated that the developer requested that Docket #3633 be reopened in order to discuss converting part of the approved first floor commercial space to an accessible residential unit. The applicant has gone to the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (AAB), which approved the accessible unit. The applicant submitted revised architectural plans, communication with the former Director of DPCD relating to the parking area, site photos, and elevator study diagrams.

Owner Darren DiNucci and architect Monte French were present. Mr. DiNucci said that a lot of inaccurate information has been circulating about this project, and he hopes that anyone with comments or questions about the project bring it to the Board rather than speculate about it on social media. Mr. DiNucci said that he was contacted by Mike Ciampa, Director of Inspectional Services, last April, letting him know that the building permit was issued in error and recommending that he go to the AAB, which he did. He is a member of the community, and he is committed to working with the Board. Since first going before the Board, he has complied with and communicated with the Board at every step.

Mr. French presented the updated plans. As requested by the Board, they removed the left-hand bicycle corridor which took up some of the first-floor space; access to bicycle storage is now through the side yard. Removing the corridor enabled them to increase the area of the office to 600 square feet and of the accessible unit to 550 square feet. They also removed the stairs connecting the side yard to the rear yard and made the side yard open space for the accessible unit, which the AAB accepted. The side yard also provides access to the long-term bicycle storage and the trash toward the rear of the building. The Director of the AAB approved every aspect of their plans. The commercial space has a dedicated bathroom and a small storage closet. The accessible first-floor unit includes a galley-style kitchen and accessible bathroom. There is short-term bicycle parking in front of the building, with more spots than the minimum required.

Mr. French also shared a series of emails with Jennifer Raitt, former Director of DPCD, in which they requested changes to parking based on the discovery of extensive ledge, which made their original plans impossible. He said that Ms. Raitt approved all the parking changes.

Mr. French noted that the construction had proceeded quite far by the time Mr. Ciampa contacted them about needing an accessible unit. He shared photos of the site as it currently exists, showing the front and side yards (before landscaping), the driveway, and the partially finished interiors.

Mr. French shared an elevator study, as requested by the Board. If an elevator is installed, it must serve all units. All potential options for placement of the elevator are disruptive and would take space away from the commercial and residential units and would require redoing bathrooms and kitchens that have already been built.

Mr. French also shared two parking studies, each of which included two full-size spaces and three compact spaces, rather than the five compact spaces they previously planned.

Mr. Revilak said that long-term bicycle parking must be protected from the weather and be secure, so outdoor long-term spaces would need to be in a locked enclosure. It would be preferable to increase the number of indoor spaces from six to eight. One option would be to have the spaces at 45-degree angles with 4-foot on-center spacing.

Mr. Revilak asked if the discovery of ledge and the issues with the shoring of the retaining wall to the rear of the property played a role in the request to change the dimensions of the parking spaces. Mr. French said that was the case, and referred to a series of emails between architect Emily Driscoll and Jennifer Raitt about those changes. Mr. DiNucci explained that the site engineer discovered that the footing of the retaining wall at the rear of the parking would need to be much larger than expected, which significantly reduced the space available for parking.

Mr. Benson asked for the square footage of the accessible studio apartment. Mr. French said that the gross square footage is 549, and the net square footage is 485. Mr. Benson also asked about windows in the accessible unit and about adding a window on the side exterior wall. Mr. French replied that the only window is the large window in the front. Two sides of the unit are interior walls, and it is not possible to add a window on the other exterior wall. The AAB approved the unit with only one window because it is a very tall window covering most of the front wall, and it allows plenty of light. Mr. Benson asked if the occupant of the accessible unit would have access to the trash storage in the rear room, and Mr. French replied that they would. Mr. Benson asked if any of the parking spaces are accessible. Mr. French said that they are not, which was specifically reviewed with the AAB. Mr. Benson asked how many full-size and how many compact parking spaces they were proposing. Mr. French said that they have proposed two options, both of which include two full-size and three compact parking spaces.

Ms. Korman-Houston noted that the large front window is appropriate for a commercial space but not a residential space. She asked if there was a way to create a slightly smaller window appropriate for a residential space without significantly changing the look from the street. The Chair asked if they could put two double-hung windows in each of the bay windows, so that it doesn't look like a large storefront window looking into a residential space. Mr. French said that there are ways to remove the glazing and put in different artificial grills or other dividers. Mr. DiNucci said that changing those windows would make the building look terrible. His plan was to install a high-quality blind system that would allow the resident privacy while still getting all the light of the window. He never considered changing the window style because he thought the Board wanted it to look like a commercial space. The Chair replied that they did want that when it actually was a commercial space. Mr. DiNucci said that completely changing the windows would cost a significant amount of money, but they can change the aesthetics more simply. He also noted that the exterior will be landscaped, which will be a buffer that will block the bottom of the window. Ms. Korman-Houston said that none of that would address the look from the interior; it would look strange from inside a residential unit to have floor to ceiling windows across the entire front of the unit, particularly on the ground floor. Mr. DiNucci said that his hope is to find blinds that will mitigate that effect, but it would also be simple to build a wall on the inside that would cover the lower portion of the window. Ms. Korman-Houston noted that a wall on the inside would look strange from the outside if the window still goes to the ground. Mr. French said that there are applique grills and other treatments that can alter the look of the window from the outside.

Mr. Lau agreed that it is important to soften the look of the windows of the residential unit. He also asked if they intend to include any EV charging units in the parking lot. Mr. DiNucci said that they do. Mr. Lau said that if they only intend to

have one EV charging unit, he would recommend using the parking plan that places all the parking spaces in a row, so they can put it between a compact space and a full-size space, enabling cars of different sizes to use it. If they intend to have two EV charging units, they can use the other parking plan and place one charging unit by each set of parking spaces. Mr. French noted that the first parking plan is better for snow removal.

Mr. Lau asked about the grading of the rear yard. Mr. French replied that they intend to do some regrading to meet the open space requirements. But the open space will not be as far above the parking as initially planned, because the level of the parking has been significantly raised, due to the issues with ledge. Mr. Lau also wanted to make sure that rainwater and melting snow from the open space will not wash into the parking area. Mr. DiNucci said that it would not because of the drainage systems installed.

The Chair expressed disappointment in the fact that the whole first floor will not be commercial, which is what the Board initially approved in 2020. If the Board approves this amendment, it will be because they are trying to work with the applicant in the current conditions; it is not a precedent for what they would generally approve for a mixed-use project.

The Chair noted that all the upper residential units have the ability to open their windows, but the accessible first-floor unit does not. She would prefer to replace the large commercial window with double-hung windows to enable the resident to naturally ventilate their space. Changing the look of the windows for the accessible unit would also help to differentiate the first-floor commercial space from the residential space. She thinks that the first-floor windows can be made to be visually continuous with the upper-floor windows, so it's not a problem if they're not continuous with the first-floor windows of the commercial unit. This is a different use from what was originally approved, and the windows should reflect that. Mr. DiNucci replied that it would be easier to cut another window in the side wall that could be a large double-hung window, enabling the resident to open it, than to change the front window. Mr. Benson said that his preference would be to add a side window. It would add more light, and it would allow the resident to open a window not immediately facing Mass Ave and the sidewalk. Mr. Lau agreed. The Chair said that she is still concerned about how the front window will look and how difficult it will be for the resident to control light and privacy with shades given that it is such a large window.

The Chair opened the floor for public comment:

- Carl Wagner, 30 Edgehill Road, Precinct 15 Town Meeting Member – He appreciates that the Board is standing up for the future occupants of the first-floor unit. Having only one window that doesn't open and faces north is unacceptable. He also appreciates that the plan is following accessibility laws. However, as public correspondence relating to this project has pointed out, the parking is still not legal. The Board has the ability to reduce the number of spaces, so they could reduce it to four spaces but make one accessible.

Seeing no one else who wished to speak, the Chair closed public comment.

Mr. DiNucci said that the front window will allow for privacy because it is heavily tinted. The Chair replied because of the size and style of the window, it doesn't feel like a residential unit, even if it allows for privacy. Spaces need to be designed with their particular use in mind, and trying to change a commercial space to a residential space after designing it with commercial windows doesn't provide for a good residential space, especially as compared to the other residential units in the building. She also noted that a side window would be looking at the side of the adjacent commercial building. She asked if they could work with the neighboring property owner about putting plantings there so that the view from the side window wasn't just of the wall. Mr. DiNucci replied that he knows and works well with that owner, and that the entire side yard is part of the 1500 Mass Ave property, so they can do whatever landscaping they want in that space. The Chair suggested some sort of trellised vegetation on the neighboring wall.

Mr. Revilak likes the idea of adding a window to the side. He thinks that the look of the floor to ceiling window in the front looks too commercial, and he would like the bottom portion of that to be covered, perhaps with a low wall, so that it's not visible from the exterior and does not look to the public like a commercial space.

Mr. Benson said that adding a large window on the side of the accessible unit makes it a much better project and a better place to live. He thinks that this is a difficult situation. In 2020, the Board and developer came up with something that they all thought would work, but it ended up not working, so now they have to figure out what to do. He is not as

concerned about the front window if a side window is added. Finding a way to soften it and make it look less commercial would be good. It's not ideal, but this is not an ideal situation.

Mr. Benson said that does not believe that the Board has the authority to allow more than one compact parking space. They could reduce the overall number of spaces to four with the submission of a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan. They could also approve the overall plan with the requirement that they go to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to get a variance for the parking. He asked Mr. French if they could include four standard spaces. He replied that they could with the second parking option, but not the first. Mr. Benson noted that if they approved a reduction to four spaces, one of the tenants would not have a parking space. Mr. DiNucci replied that there is a bus stop directly in front, and he thinks they may well get one or more tenants without a car even if all the units offer parking spaces. He would be fine with marketing one of the spaces as having no parking. If the Board agrees with the four-space option, they could include administrative approval of a TDM plan by DPCD staff as a condition. The Chair said that she believes that the Board can provide relief on Section 6.1.11.C.(11), which deals with compact parking spaces. She would also be fine with the applicant going down to four spaces and providing a TDM plan to DPCD staff. Mr. French said that he thinks they already have most of the pieces required for a TDM plan. Mr. Revilak said that part of a TDM plan could be including outlets for charging electric bikes in the bike storage room. Mr. Benson said that another part could be charging tenants for parking spaces rather than automatically including a space with four of the units.

Ms. Korman-Houston agreed that an operable window is important. It would be nice to have more than one, but she can accept just one on the side. The front window also needs to have some treatment that makes it more appropriate for a residential unit. Mr. DiNucci noted that the first-floor residential unit already includes an opening for a door which they plan to close up; they could close the lower half and turn the upper half, which would be above a kitchen counter, into a window, as well as putting a second window in the bedroom area. Mr. French said that it would also be possible to put surface-applied artificial grills on the front windows. Ms. Korman-Houston likes the idea of two windows on the side. She would like to see an image of what the grills on the front windows would look like. The Chair said that the applicants could provide that to DPCD.

Mr. Lau said that he would like the applicant to remove the two bicycle parking spaces in front of the ground-floor residential unit, so that they can have a front porch area, rather than public bicycle parking. He noted that the plans already provide more bicycle parking than required. Mr. French and Mr. DiNucci agreed.

The Chair asked the applicant to provide to DPCD a front elevation showing options for simulated dividers for the windows of the first-floor residential unit that will differentiate it from the commercial space next door. She also noted that blinds that go across the entire width of the windows would be very unwieldy, especially given that this is an accessible unit that may be occupied by someone with a disability of some sort. Dividers will enable the installation of multiple sets of blinds that are not as wide. She would be fine with administrative approval of those plans; other Board members agreed. Mr. French said that they would submit revised drawings as well as images of materials.

The Chair summarized conditions for approval:

- reduce parking to four full-size spaces, with a Transportation Demand Management plan submitted to DPCD for administrative approval;
- remove bicycle parking in front of first-floor residential unit;
- add two punch openings to masonry wall into accessible unit for operable windows;
- add vertical vegetation along the wall of the adjacent property, directly across from those windows;
- submit elevation detailing simulated divider lights to be added to the two front windows of the accessible unit to DPCD for administrative approval; and
- ensure that all eight long-term bicycle spaces are in the bicycle room, including charging stations for e-bikes.

The Chair noted that these would be new conditions, in addition to the conditions of the original Special Permit. In the case of a conflict between these conditions and the original conditions, these new conditions would supersede the prior conditions.

The Chair asked for a motion to approve Docket #3633, the reopened Special Permit for 1500 Massachusetts Avenue, with the conditions as stated. Mr. Lau so moved, Mr. Benson seconded, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.



The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 4 – Representative to Community Preservation Act (CPA) Committee.**

Ms. Ricker explained that the Board has a designated seat on the CPA Committee, which decides how to distribute CPA funds.

Mr. Lau moved to nominate Ms. Korman-Houston as the Board's representative to the CPA Committee, and she accepted the nomination. Mr. Benson seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 5 – Open Forum.**

The Chair opened the floor to public comment:

- Ms. Wynelle Evans, Orchard Place – She brought a concern to the Board several months ago regarding the development at 882 Mass Ave. It appears that the entire portion of the ground floor that faces Mass Ave is a gym for the use of residents. The back of the building has drawn shades and no signage indicating commercial use, so it appears that this is no longer a mixed-use building. In addition, the frosted glass on the Mass Ave side does not meet the transparency requirements, which is 60% of the glass between 2 and 8 feet from ground level. The affordable units in that building were undersized, overpriced, and not properly dispersed throughout the building. The same property owners also have a project at 455 Mass Ave, which originally had a one-bedroom affordable unit of 687 square feet, which does not meet the minimum of 700 square feet required by state law. She would like to know if that issue has been resolved.

Ms. Ricker replied that they are working closely with the developer, especially concerning unit size.

Mr. Lau replied that 882 Mass is still a mixed-use building. The first-floor tenant is a therapist of some sort, but they do not want signage.

Seeing no one else who wished to speak, the Chair closed public comment.

The Chair moved to **Agenda Item 6 – New Business.**

Ms. Ricker reminded the Board that they will be having a joint meeting with the Select Board on Monday, September 16, 2024. She is working with the Select Board Administrator to make sure that they are in an appropriate space, with adequate seating for the two Boards. The Chair said that she is working with the Select Board Chair on an agenda.

Mr. Revilak asked if DPCD has gotten any responses to the Arlington Master Plan Update (AMPUp) RFP. She replied that they have received quite a few questions, which hopefully indicates an interest in submitting a proposal. She held a briefing on August 23, 2024, attended by two firms.

Mr. Revilak asked if DPCD will have a booth at Town Day, and if they have any staffing needs. Ms. Ricker replied that DPCD does have a booth. DPCD staff will be working that table, but additional volunteers would be welcome. The table will be highlighting AMPUp, the Arlington Heights Business District, and the Fox Library Feasibility Study. Other projects of DPCD have separate tables.

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

Meeting **Adjourned at 10:10 pm.**