

**Arlington Zoning Recodification**  
**All Boards Meeting, January 28, 2017**  
**RKG Meeting Notes**

- What is working well:
  - Generally, people seem happy with the way the Town has evolved over the last 10-15 years
  - Bylaw has worked well for a long time
  - Conversion of former auto uses, bylaw has successfully addressed this
  - Historically has done well to maintain commercial districts (3 centers/districts)
  - Encouraged a diversity of uses across town, particularly supporting smaller businesses
  - Inclusionary zoning has been a positive, for developments that have been large enough to trigger it
  - Group homes are well-integrated into the neighborhoods
  
- What should be changed?
  - Bylaw isn't doing a great job of addressing the tear down/rebuild phenomenon
  - ZBA (SP vs. Variance):
    - Special Permit criteria are understood, but people don't seem to understand the variance criteria. Is there a way to create a guidebook for what is a SP and what will trigger a variance?
    - Is there a way to clarify through other material that a variance has to meet the three non-personal criteria? People think personal hardship is good enough to get a variance.
  - Signs
    - In both general bylaw, ZBL, and historic district
  - Section 9
    - Changes to existing structures
    - Increases to non-conformity – need to clarify this
    - Need illustrations, use line art
  - FAR
    - Can explain this more easily. Open space is very hard to explain, how do you measure it, what counts?
    - Recommendations for establishing a height and a footprint and then let people work within that.
  - Very hard to legislate aesthetics in the ZBL, would love to see the ZBL address some of these aesthetic issues.
  - Use Table
    - Ways to get rid of old uses/terms.

- Definitions and regulations conflict with state statutes and case law
- There are standards in the uses/definitions that need to be cleaned up
- Consolidate uses and update the standards/definitions. Certain uses have long list of things that can or can't happen. For example, gas stations.
- Need to have more definitions, and there are definitions that have regulatory content which shouldn't be there
- Districts
  - Need to look more holistically at neighborhoods and commercial districts to create more consistent districts
- Residents
  - Hard for a home owner to figure out what they can or can't do to a house.
  - Make process more clear for residents. Which boards need to be involved. Clarify scope of authority of each board.
- Town Meeting
  - Write and present things in a way that is easy for TM to understand, they need to understand what the choices are and what the impacts may be
- Predictability
  - Create standards that work across the board, people know what they can and can't do, organize the document as best you can, and people will know where to look to find what they want.
  - What is the process when someone needs to meet with multiple boards to get approvals for a project? Where do you go first? Need a clear permitting guide. (this is true with board of health, conn comm, ZBA, ARB, and historic commission).
  - Is there a way to circulate a paper around to each board that tell an applicant which boards they have to go to and which they don't?
  - Way to create a more formal internal administrative review process for applicants.
- Discretion
  - You're already 0% non-conforming, then you make a change which makes you more than 0%, do you have to go to Special Permit? This is a point where the blg dept could step in and do an administrative determination.
  - Town could adopt bylaw that allows a "zoning administrator" to make certain administrative determinations
- Town needs a zoning administrator/Enforcement Officer

- Administrative Regs
  - EDR – notations for six annual town meetings where changes were made as it relates to the application.
- Coordination
  - Greater coordination across boards, one way into the process so everyone knows what's going on. People should go to Planning Office to get guidance on how to start the process.
- Recently permitting projects that illustrates undesirable features of the ZBL?
  - 50 Washington street
    - Doesn't address retaining walls. Doesn't really address how a property owner changes the grade and height of the land. People will dig down 20' to create parking and walk out basements.
    - There is also an issue where story height doesn't mesh with state building code (7' vs. 7'2" height measurement). This creates issues for how you determine full and half-stories, creating issues for the building dept when they have to do reviews.

