



Envision Arlington Standing Committee

Date: Wednesday, September 23, 2020
Time: 7:30 - 9:00 PM
Location: Zoom

Attendees: Kelly Lynema, Greg Christiana, Scott Lever, Juli Brazile, Michael Brownstein, Elisabeth Carr-Jones

Guests: Beth Benedikt (TMM), Alex Bagnall (precinct 7), Elizabeth Dray (TTM P8), Len Diggins, Jo Anne Preston

DRAFT Minutes

1. Introductions

Kelly opened with an explanation of Gov. Baker's suspension of normal rules around open meetings and allowance of remote meetings, such as the current meeting by Zoom.

I was disappointed in Lt. Pedrini's apology, which hasn't changed in the past year and a half. But rather than focus the apology, would like to focus on how to break down the barriers between

2. Approve minutes

Minutes from August 11 were approved unanimously.

3. Ethics information to Town Committees (Kelly Lynema)

Kelly has emailed everyone instructions and link to Ethics training that members of the Standing Committee are required to take regularly. Kelly asks that we take the training and email a PDF of the certificate to her by Oct 1.

4. Update from Greg Christiana on Envision Arlington's response to recent events

Greg reported on the Standing Committee 8/13 working group where the committee drafted a statement released on the Envision Arlington page of the Town website, calling for closer collaboration with DTG and AHRC on facing diversity, equity, and inclusion challenges. Greg also shared an update on the Pedrini apology and Q&A session in which he participated as a member of the reaction panel.

Len mentioned a Rainbow Coalition event that DTG wasn't entirely aware of, suggesting that communication could be improved there.

Juli said that while watching the reaction panel of the Pedrini event, she considered opportunities for Envision Arlington to provide education around technical policy details like negotiations of union contracts. E.g. Inviting Sandy Pooler and Karen Malloy to present on the topic.

Scott discussed the warrant article about a Civilian Review Board and Chief Flaherty's competing article for a "sounding board" committee. Doug Heim, Town Counsel, could potentially help with that education given his deep knowledge of policy. Len said he really liked the idea of heading down the policy route. Scott agreed, saying that a discussion around policy and process, like who the Chief of Police reports to and who has what authority could be enlightening. Greg and Len said this could be an effort that comes out of Governance or Fiscal Resources.

5. Update on Department of Planning & Community Development Projects and Processes

Kelly provided an update on DPCD by first outlining the range of projects resulting from the 2015 Master Plan and some work that has been completed since the plan was adopted, such as recodification of zoning, the Mill Brook report, economic development projects, the Arts & Culture Action Plan, and other projects.

The Master Plan didn't cover transportation sufficiently, so DPCD hired a Senior Transportation planner who is managing the development of the Sustainable Transportation Plan. The department is also working on

- an open-space plan, prioritizing funding and investment
- Net-zero plan for zero carbon emissions by 2050 with Ken Pruitt, the Town's Energy Manager and the Clean Energy Future Committee
- Residential Design Guidelines
- An analysis of Industrial Zoning Districts

Two key projects that DPCD is working on going forward are Connect Arlington, the Sustainable Transportation Plan, and discussions around housing and economic development with the joint Select Board and ARB meetings. In particular, related to housing DPCD is looking to update the 2016 Housing Production Plan, which is particularly timely with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Kelly stated that she sees Envision Arlington as a neutral Town body that may be able to assist with outreach and education to understand the community's opinions and priorities. DPCD would like to find ways of working with Envision Arlington going forward to broaden outreach.

Len stated that he feels the Town needs more diversity in housing at different price points, and that this directly relates to Sustainable Arlington and DTG. He also mentioned that the Select Board needs to be more involved in the process.

Kelly noted that a change to zoning requires a 2/3 majority vote at Town Meeting which is a high bar. Any changes to zoning require substantial outreach and education for Town Meeting members.

Scott noted that he sees the topic of housing from a couple of angles: teachers having trouble living locally, being able to afford living in Arlington; and crowding from enrollment growth that could require redistricting. He asked the group about there not being a task group that's a natural home for transportation or housing. Is that something we should address?

Juli said that the Standing Committee can reach out to existing groups to see if there's interest in them working together, possibly to form a transportation or housing

task group. Should check with Dan, the transportation planner. She pointed out that there are already a number of boards and committees working on some of these issues.

Kelly suggested that the Standing Committee could help with outreach to Town Meeting Members since they're decision makers in this process.

Juli reported that the Town Moderator is going to require that Town Meeting Members provide an email address that will be listed publicly.

Len suggested holding forums for Town Meeting Members to discuss and learn about warrant articles. He would like to see if Sustainable Arlington is interested in picking up issues around housing or transportation. Amos would be interested in a deeper dive on the results of the Town Survey related to sustainability.

6. Discussion on the Annual Town Survey

Juli introduced the discussion on the 2021 Town Survey, stating that we need to analyze the survey results beginning in March so that the results are actionable in time for Town Meeting usually in late April or early May. She recommended keeping the survey limited to four or five topic areas.

She cautioned that sometimes groups forget to come to us, so the Standing Committee should make sure to reach out to them. E.g. there haven't been questions about seniors in a few years, so we should reach out to the Council on Aging to see if they have survey questions whose answers could help with their decision-making.

Juli also said that we have a small number of survey experts who help us each year. It's often best to ask the groups (boards, committees, Town departments) what information they need in order to make a decision, rather than having them focus on formulating the specific questions. The job of Envision Arlington is to prepare a summary for the public.

Communication and outreach will involve social media and an insert in the census in January.

Kelly mentioned that the survey is funded by CDBG moneys, so Jenny Raitt and Town Manager need to make a final approval of the questions in December. Also need to let question stakeholders take a final look before publishing.

7. Planning Approach to Town Survey

Scott has set up a page in Trello (trello.com) to manage the project. He's started to list several ToDo's based on conversations with Juli given her experience with past surveys. Will need to work with people for distribution of the paper surveys, like the Senior Center.

Scott would also like to discuss the idea of a visualization platform with someone in the town.

Greg said he's been working with Open Data for Arlington (<https://arlingtonma.info/>), which is a group of volunteers that take publicly available data and visualize it. So if

the Town doesn't have the bandwidth to visualize data, this group might be able to help.

Len asked about whether we could encourage expanded use of paper surveys. Julie noted that while some people prefer to fill out paper surveys, each year many paper surveys have been taken and not returned. But a gentle note recommended that surveys should be taken only if they're going to be filled out and returned. Kelly mentioned that administering the survey on paper was extremely time consuming and a high staff and equipment burden on DPCD.

Len reminded the group to do outreach through ACMI as well.

8. Budget update

Elisabeth reported that money spent for last fiscal year ending June 30 was less than expected because of cancellation due to COVID-19. So we were well under budget for FY 2020. Juli is helping develop a template for FY 2021 based on years past before COVID-19. Putting together a budget based on CDBG moneys. Gift account made up of donations that are earmarked for DTG usage; this rolls over.

Len asked if we spent about \$300 out of \$3k. Juli corrected that we spent closer to \$500, but usually spend \$2-3k in a typical year.

Elisabeth said that some money will roll over for specific purposes, but most of the unused budget will not be kept by Envision Arlington.

9. New Business

Kelly shared that DPCD is administering round two of CDBG funds which can be used for people to stay in their apartments, but there have been few applicants. The program can provide up to \$2,000 per month for three months to qualified applicants, even if they already participated in round one. She asked people to share the information in their networks.

Elisabeth said that while Sue wasn't here tonight, she wanted to share an update regarding the Envision Arlington Facebook account. It's ready to use, with updated profile images, if we need to publish statements quickly in the future.