

MBTA Communities Working Group

June 6th, 2023 Minutes

Attending: Mette Aamodt, Vincent Baudoin, Rebecca Gruber, Kin Lau, Sanjay Newton, Stephen Revilak, Laura Wiener

Staff: Talia Fox, Marisa Lau, Teresa Marzilli, Claire Ricker

Preparation for June 8th Public Meeting

Members of the working group finalized presentation roles for June 8th. Ms. Ricker and Mr. Newton will introduce the event, Utile will provide an overview of what Arlington needs to do in order to comply with Section 3A, Mr. Revilak will present the survey results and introduce the map, and Ms. Gruber will introduce the table exercises.

Utile provided a new version of the draft map, and this is what we'll present during Thursday night's forum. The new map takes more of a corridor approach, and assumes an average density of four dwellings per parcel (the previous draft assumed three dwellings/parcel). Members of the working group requested several changes for Thursday's presentation. These include: omitting parcel lines, keeping roadways, adding a color key for the different districts (or showing the districts with a single color), adding the word "Draft", and having the proposed districts extend all the way to Mass Ave, or commercial districts that abut Mass Ave.

Ms. Aamodt and Ms. Wiener voiced concern about whether an average of four dwellings per parcel was the desired scale, and whether the map looked more fully-conceived than it actually was at this stage. Mr. Lau, Mr. Baudoin, and Mr. Revilak were more comfortable with the ambiguity, and felt the goal was to provide something for the public to comment on. The working group agreed to emphasize that this map is just a draft, which will change during subsequent iterations.

Mr. Lau requested that Utile provide massing models of four-, six-, and twelve-unit multi-family buildings, along with what could reasonably be built on 5,000 and 10,000 square foot lots. He'd like to plug these into our Sketch-up model of the Mass Ave corridor, in order to help the public visualize what the buildings might look like.

The working group discussed draft documents that they were asked to review, particularly the table questions for Thursday's forum. The authors of the table questions agreed to make refinements, incorporate feedback, and provide new versions to staff by 2:00 pm Wednesday afternoon. Ms. Aamodt felt the survey report should have more of an emphasis on sustainability. Mr. Newton suggested tabling discussion of the survey report, since it won't be released until after Thursday's forum.

Ms. Fox asked the working group for a list of materials to include in the table packets. The contents of the packet will include:

- One 11x17 map for each participant. These will be for participants to take home.
- One set of reference maps per table. The reference maps will include a current zoning map, a historic district map, a map of bus lines, and a flood plain map.
- One copy of the discussion questions per participant.
- Name tags.

Finally, the group outlines the format for table discussions. The proposed format will be

- Introductions, with an icebreaker question.
- Asking participants to spend a few minutes reading over the questions.
- Asking participants to spend a few minutes discussing the questions in groups of two or three (e.g., by talking to the person next to them)
- Facilitators leading a discussion that involves the entire table.
- Having report-outs from each table.

Next Steps

After the forum, staff will send a poll to select our next meeting dates.

Ms. Aamodt suggests having two-hour meetings (rather than 90 minutes) in order to have more time for discussion. She'd like the process to include a more formal analysis and synthesis of existing planning documents and historical zoning maps. Ms. Aamodt was also dismayed at town politics that seemed to be getting in the way of some discussions, and she expressed an interest in inviting critical stakeholders to future working group meetings, in order to make them part of the process.

Ms. Ricker acknowledges that the open meeting format can make it challenging to do work that requires a lot of discussion.

Mr. Revilak asks the working group to review the draft minutes and survey report narrative, and to send suggested edits directly to him.

Documents Reviewed

- Draft map from Utile, for the June 8th public forum
- Drafts of discussion questions titled "What Zoning do we Want to Support Existing and New Business?", "How should MBTA Communities zoning fit in with our Commercial and Industrial districts?", and "What Size / Scale of Buildings?"
- Draft copies of minutes from the May 23rd and May 30th meetings
- Draft copy of the survey report narrative.

V2.5 DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION | Presented to Working Group on 6/6

- Existing Commercial Zoning
- Existing Industrial Zoning
- Local Historic District

