

MBTA Communities Working Group

February 28, 2023

Meeting Summary

Attending: Mette Aamodt, Vince Baudoin: Rebecca Gruber, Shaina Korman-Houston, Kin Lau, Sanjay Newton, Stephen Revilak, Laura Wiener

Staff: Kelly Lynema, Teresa Marzilli, Claire Ricker

Welcome & Meeting Objectives

Kelly Lynema introduces Teresa Marzilli, who's the outreach coordinator in the DEI office. She'll be working with our group on outreach efforts.

Planning, Outreach and Follow Up for the March 9th Community Visioning Session

Ms. Lynema believes we should look at the March 9th public forum as the kickoff to a community engagement process. She had a meeting with (consulting firm) Utile last week; they'll provide technical expertise but we'll take the lead on public engagement.

Ms. Lynema proposes the following structure for March 9th Community Forum:

- An overview presentation about Section 3A, to provide context for the high-level goals we have to achieve.
- Breakout groups and exercises. This will involve presenting poll questions, discussing them, and collecting answers. A number of questions will have maps associated with them.
- Reconvening, perhaps with report outs.
- A discussion of next steps and ways to engage.

Ms. Aamodt and Mr. Baudoin express feelings of urgency. Mr. Baudoin asks if there's a strategy for generating proposals while community engagement takes place.

Ms. Gruber says she's participated in breakout groups where the facilitator played an advocacy role. She wonders if there will be time for conversation, and individual voting. Ms. Lynema says that the zoom polls are both individual and anonymous.

Ms. Ricker thinks the group should assume we're moving towards adoption; "don't do this" isn't the reason we're here. Ms. Gruber thinks there might be an expectation that group facilitators will be neutral, and that's not the case here. She thinks it's worth making sure the "will do" message is clear, to avoid having the process attacked.

Mr. Newton thinks the question is not whether to come into compliance, but how to do so. Ms. Aamodt suggests using the term "breakout group leaders" rather than "facilitators". Mr. Newton suggests we say that we're "premised on doing it", because the decision is really up to town meeting. He thinks it's important for participants to feel like their opinion matters.

Ms. Lynema shows a slide with the current schedule proposal. The plan is to do visioning and listening through May. At that point, we'll take what we've heard, develop scenarios, and bring them back to the community. A number of the poll questions focus on location, because that's what we'll have to commit to first. Ms. Ricker thinks we should specifically reach out to several boards, and ask for their participation.

Next, the group moves on to discussing the poll questions.

This discussion takes up a substantial part of the meeting. For example, one of the proposed questions asks if we should "encourage the creation of deed-restricted affordable housing". Group members discuss how this isn't a question about general support – it has a more specific meaning in the context of multi-family zoning for MBTA communities. For example, inclusionary zoning (IZ) is one way to get deed restricted affordable housing. Arlington's IZ requirements don't go into effect until someone builds a building with at least six dwellings. If we allow six or more dwellings by right, then we might get some affordable units through IZ; if we don't allow six or more by right, then we won't get any affordable units through that provision. Density bonuses are another way to get affordable units, and there could be a conversation around whether the zoning should provide for such bonuses.

A few of the proposed questions touch on the subject of commercial development and support for businesses. Again, there's discussion on how to clarify the tie to multi-family housing. "Supporting businesses" could mean allowing ground floor commercial, or it could mean locating new housing within walking distance of existing business districts. Ultimately, we want to connect Section 3A's requirements to priorities that people want to see in the community.

Ms. Lynema offered to finalize questions based on the group's feedback; Mr. Newton and Ms. Aamodt offered to review the finished questions. The group approved of this plan. Mr. Revilak and Mr. Newton offered to review slides from prior meetings and recommend slides for the introductory presentation on 3/9.

Ms. Lynema noted that she would be spending part of the next week creating a facilitator guide, finalizing the slide deck, survey, and meeting in a box kits.

Once the weather gets better, we can consider other outreach strategies, like flyering in Arlington Center, or along the Minuteman bikeway.

Approval of Meeting Summaries

The meeting ends with the group approving meeting summaries from Feb 2, and Feb 13, 2023.