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Redevelopment Board Minutes 10/04/2004

Arlington Redevelopment Board Minutes
October 4, 2004

Members Present~: Ed Tsoi
Roly Chaput
Lynne Lowenstein

Also Present~: Kevin J. O'Brien, Secretary ex officio
Laura Wiener, Planner
Joey Glushko, Planner

At 6:15 p.m., the Board convened at the site of McClennen Park for a tour and status report, and recessed at 6:50 to return to Town Hall.

Members Present: Ed Tsoi
Barry Faulkner
Roly Chaput
Lynne Lowenstein
Nora Mann

Also Present: Kevin J. O'Brien, Secretary ex officio
Laura Wiener, Planner
Joey Glushko, Planner

Ed Tsoi reconvened the meeting at 7:05 and introduced Nick Mitropolous, John Griffin and Frank Hurd from the Arlington Housing Authority (AHA). John Griffin explained that the Housing Authority, following up on its meeting with the ARB in the spring, now wanted to purchase two affordable units in the building under construction at 264 Massachusetts Avenue. Mr. Griffin indicated that the AHA has eight families overhoused in two bedroom units and needs one bedroom units so the larger units can house larger families.

At the request of the chair, Kevin O'Brien summarized the memo, indicating that his recommendation to the ARB was to support the AHA's acquisition of market rate units, to encourage the Selectmen and Town Manager to make CDBG funds available to the AHA for such housing, but not to make already affordable units available for such use.

In the context of discussion, Griffin agreed that there had been miscommunication regarding the HA perception of the willingness of Planning Staff to work with them and, in fact that no statements about quality of tenants had, in fact been made.

Nora Mann indicated that it is a bad idea to start at this point in a development, rather than in the permitting process. Nick Mitropolous asked why the ARB did not discourage the Housing Authority before this? Nora Mann replied that she had always expressed discomfort with the proposal. Nick Mitropolous said that there was no mention in March of an objection to rentals. Ed Tsoi said that he didn't think that the ARB encouraged them to look at units at 264 Mass. Ave. Frank Hurd said that at the earlier meeting they didn't have specific units in mind, and Ed Tsoi asked what they were interested in if they did not get units at 264 Mass. Ave. John Griffin said that they were focusing on 264 Mass Ave, and if they were not given them they that the Housing Authority had voted to give him and Nick Mitropolous the power to decide to begin eminent domain proceedings.

In the context of discussion about the HA purchasing other units, John Griffin pointed out that market rate units in Arizona Terrace were not available to the Housing Authority because they were within 1/8 of a mile of existing AHA units and Frank Hurd mentioned that they spoke of the 1/8 mile rule when they brought up the subject in March. He said the State felt better about purchasing new units in terms of the sustainability of the units.

John Griffin pointed out that there is no difference to the developer; the developer would still get the same amount of money. There was general discussion about the fact that these would be rental units in the middle of an ownership building. In response to a question from Nick Mitropolous, local developer Ed Hovsepian replied that rentals were never allowed in his condominiums.

Frank Hurd reiterated that the State liked the use of inclusionary units and pointed out that the rents could be kept low and the AHA would make up the difference. Frank Hurd pointed out that the AHA could probably take on only three units in the near future, it wouldn't be a big program.

Ed Tsoi pointed out that the ARB works with developers and that the AHA works with tenants. He was afraid that the developers would simply go to the next town if their units were subject to AHA rentals. Nora Mann explained that the Board does not think it is good policy to force business owners to accept rentals in their condominium buildings. It was also not fair to impose such a requirement on a developer so late in the development process.

Kevin O'Brien mentioned that that Arlington's inclusionary zoning program was no different from the State, in its 40B program: where no subsidy is provided, but developers are required to provide subsidized housing, the level of affordability was set at persons making 80% of median income. Ed Tsoi expressed dismay that two Town boards could not cooperate to find common ground.

On a motion by Nora Mann, seconded by Barry Faulkner, the Board voted 4 – 0 (Lynne Lowenstein recused herself) to not direct the owner of 264 Massachusetts Avenue to sell affordable units to the Housing Authority which will then be used as rental units.

Ed Tsoi asked that the Housing Authority to let the ARB help with another project in the future.

Roland Chaput said that the ARB should encourage the Selectmen that CDBG funds should be made available to the Housing Authority for their proposal.

The Board then turned its attention to the Symmes Neighborhood Advisory Committee (SNAC). Kevin O'Brien reported the schedule that Terry Dash had emailed for the neighborhood to propose members for the SNAC. Paul Morrison asked if the Board's minutes would reflect the fact that the Town Meeting had voted to form the SNAC. Kevin O'Brien responded that it would reflect the fact by virtue of his mentioning it.

Ed Tsoi next asked that Jake Upton of Symmes Redevelopment Associates give the Board an update on the Symmes project. Jake explained that they are doing the phase two environmental study, and looking closely at the Zoning bylaw to determine direction for the development of the design in light of trying to minimize blasting. They are pursuing occupants for the medical office building. They are talking to the Marino Center and to Lahey Clinic. They are discussing floor plans and parking requirements and the effects of the Worden amendment on medical use on the site.

Roland Chaput asked if they contemplated both Lahey and Marino locating on the site. Jake Upton replied that he didn't know. Ed Tsoi asked how any changes affect traffic flow. Jake Upton replied that they could study it now or make it part of the permitting procedure.

Ed Tsoi indicated that it should begin now and that they should find a format in which the Transportation Advisory Committee and the neighborhood could participate and that the SNAC could decide how to do that. It was suggested that when Fish presents its proposal to the ARB, the TAC could attend and present its findings perhaps a month from now.

Kevin O'Brien next explained the status of the contract with the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA). It was agreed that the entire amount of the Pipeline Management contract should be paid and an increase in the amount of the CRA contract was discussed but no decision was made.

The Board briefly discussed the appointment of a new member of the ARB and agreed to get any suggestions to the Town Manager by the next day.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin J. O'Brien