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Redevelopment Board Minutes 08-25-2003

Arlington Redevelopment Board
Minutes of August 25, 2003

Members Present: Roly Chaput
Lynn Lowenstein
Nora Mann
Ed Tsoi

Also Present: Kevin O'Brien, Secretary ex officio
Joey Glushko, Planner
Laura Wiener, Director of Housing

The meeting convened at 8:05. George Norton from Hollywood Video and Bob Bissonette from Game Crazy presented a revised design for the new entrance and sign for the Game Crazy portion of the Hollywood Video store. The door was considered acceptable and an improvement over the initial design, however the Board had concerns over the sign design. The Board voted 4-0 to approve the entrance design and approve the sign conditioned on the approval of the Director of Planning confirming that the purple "X" and the words "BUY, SELL, TRADE" will be individual letters mounted directly on the wall of the building, and the words "GAME CRAZY" will be individual reverse channel letters suspended in front of the wall (and other letters).

Erik Kondo, owner of the building at 397 Massachusetts Avenue, presented the changes he would like to make to the building. He proposes adding windows to the second floor of the building and adding a new entrance on the Franklin Street side of the building with an elevator and new stairway. The existing stairway on the Massachusetts Avenue side of the building which now serves the inside space will now have its own access to the street through a new doorway. The Board endorsed the concept but expressed a number of concerns about the technical changes that must be made and about the proportions of the window design. The Board suggested that the new second floor structure that houses the elevator be made to look more like the original building. Before the Board can determine if the proposed changes require a permit under Section 11.06,b,1, it asked to see a more advanced set of plans that include a specific window plan and specific plans for the elevator installation and handicapped access. The Board also wants to see the signage scheme for the new uses that will be located in the building.

Ed Davidson, Michael Collins, Brett Donham, Marshall McLean, Richard Keshian presented the plans for 50% and 100% review of the Boston Federal Savings Bank at 880 Massachusetts Avenue. Board members had reviewed samples and colors of materials that had been located at the site. The Board felt that the brick color was wrong for the site, was too dark, and that the roof color which shows up prominently was probably too bright although a sample of the material had not been made available and the Board only had pictures by which to judge. An electric transformer box had been located on the site at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Bailey Road. The Board asked the proponents to investigate a different location for the transformer. The Board decided to continue the hearing until September 8, 2003.

Ed Davidson, Michael Collins, Brett Donham, Marshall McLean, Richard Keshian presented the latest concept they have for constructing condominium units at 743 Massachusetts Avenue, the former Times Oldsmobile site. They propose 32 units in three buildings with underground parking. The Board was generally pleased with the concept which was before the Board informally as no application has been filed. Ed Tsoi made several suggestions for unifying the roofing design and asked the architects to look at the roof design carefully before applying for a special permit.

Brett Donham and Marshall McLean also informally presented to the Board a concept for an addition to the Saint Athanasius the Great Church which is located adjacent to the 743 Massachusetts Avenue site. The owners of the 743 Massachusetts Avenue site have donated 2,600 square feet of land to Saint Athanasius in order to facilitate the church's need for expansion. Father Nicholas Kastanas and Building Committee Chair, Jack Toulopoulos also attended. The proposed addition is 15,000 square feet in size and is constructed in place of a 1926 yellow brick addition which will be razed.

Prior to speaking about the submissions to the Symmes RFQ, Mr. O'Brien mentioned that the makeup of the development teams raised the issue of conflict of interest which should be handled correctly. Laura Wiener, Housing Director disclosed her role with the Housing Corporation of Arlington which is a member of one of the development teams. She has recused herself from any Corporation activity relative to the Symmes project. Ed Tsoi disclosed that he had a prior association with two members of development teams. He contacted Town Counsel by letter regarding the association and it was determined that there was no conflict. Kevin O'Brien indicated that he was contacting Robert Murray who is a consultant to the Planning Department and is also a member of a development team. Mr. Murray will have to solicit an opinion from Town Counsel by letter to determine his status.

The Board generally discussed the eight responses to the Symmes request for qualifications and decided that it would determine a lesser number of teams to receive a request for proposals (RFP). The Board members will review the responses and make a decision about the teams that would receive an RFP at the September 8, 2003, meeting. Kevin O'Brien was asked to inquire of the Town Counsel if the discussion of specific sets of qualifications can be made in executive session or must it be done in open session. There is a concern about revealing one team's information to another team before the RFP is issued.

A member of the Board asked what the status of the Historical Commission's application for establishing the historical status of the structures on the site. Mr. O'Brien responded that the Arlington Historical Commission had written a letter to the Massachusetts Historical Commission indicating that they wanted the designation put on hold.???

Kevin O'Brien discussed the plan to present the Board with a nearly complete RFP at its meeting on September 8. Ken Schwartz asked the Board if it wanted to utilize the financial model developed by Gary Mongeon for help in evaluating the responses to the RFP. It was decided that the model should be used and questions should be included in the RFP to obtain the input data for the model.

The meeting adjourned at 11:15.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin O'Brien