

March 22, 2019

Jennifer Raitt  
Director, Arlington Department of Planning and Community Development and  
Ex Officio Secretary of the Arlington Redevelopment Board  
730 Massachusetts Avenue  
Arlington MA 02476

Re: ARB consideration of Warrant Article 16

Dear Ms. Raitt:

In April, Town Meeting will have the opportunity to realize the vision of Arlington's future that is set forth in the Master Plan of 2015 (Your Arlington, Your Future) and the Housing Production Plan that was adopted by the Arlington Redevelopment Board and Board of Selectmen in 2016 and subsequently approved by the state. This is a critical moment. Many voices have been raised in opposition not just to the details of the proposed amendments to the Zoning Bylaw but to the vision that those amendments are trying to realize.

Without commenting here on the details that have been discussed in prior hearings, we do wish to voice our support for the overall vision of the Master Plan, which calls for more intense commercial and residential development along Arlington's transportation corridors. We think Town Meeting had it right in 2015 when it endorsed the Master Plan, and we encourage the ARB to stay the course.

At its public hearing on March 25, the ARB will be considering Warrant Article 16, which was proposed by Steve Revilak and 10 citizens:

*"To see if the Town will vote to amend the Zoning Bylaw by increasing the affordability requirements contained in Section 8.2 AFFORDABILITY REQUIREMENTS, such that a greater number of affordable units would be required for certain projects; or take any action related thereto."*

The bylaw language that you are currently considering to implement this article would strengthen Arlington's inclusionary zoning bylaw by requiring housing projects of 20 or more units to devote 20% of those units (as opposed to 15%) to affordable housing. The warrant article, however, is more general than this. It basically calls for increasing the obligations of certain housing projects to provide housing that is affordable to low and moderate income people. There are many ways of doing this, but in one way or another it must be done.

Arlington desperately needs housing for low and moderate income households. Skyrocketing market prices for housing have made living in Arlington practically impossible not only for low income, but also for middle class households. The Master Plan and Housing Production Plan both recognize this problem, as do most Arlington residents.

As a practical matter, the town will not be able to deliver a substantial number of affordable housing units without first providing opportunities for higher density development. The critical need is to ensure that higher density development really does provide affordable housing. An efflorescence of luxury apartments will not address the need.

We are convinced that the way forward – the quid pro quo for encouragement of higher densities – is to encourage builders to provide more affordable housing in their projects by strengthening the inclusionary zoning provisions of the bylaw, as the proposed Article 16 would require.

We are grateful to the proponents of Article 16, Steve Revilak and his co-signers, for putting this issue on the table. We strongly support taking advantage of his warrant article to move the ball forward on affordable housing.

Please share this letter with the members of the ARB in conjunction with the hearing scheduled for March 25, 2019.

Very truly yours,

Patrick Hanlon (Town Meeting Member Precinct 5)

Catherine Farrell (Town Meeting Member Precinct 5)