



ARLINGTON REDEVELOPMENT BOARD

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September 15, 2004

2004 Town Meeting
Town Hall
Arlington, MA 02476

Dear Town Meeting Members:

On Monday, September 20, 2004 Town Meeting members will be asked to vote on a change to the zoning by-law from a hospital zone to a multi-use zone at a special Town Meeting. The change will enable the proposed redevelopment of the former Symmes Hospital Site.

Although the technical matter before Town Meeting is rezoning, we all realize that this is really an examination of what is proposed to be constructed on the site of the former Symmes hospital. As the agency obligated by law to fulfill the mandate of the Town Meeting and at the Board of Selectmen in terms of their development of the site, we have tried to provide to you as much background information as needed in order to make your decision on the project. If you were unable to make the meetings or informational sessions conducted since the signing of the Land Disposition Agreement, we hope that you are able to find time to read the written materials mailed to you last week. As well, all background materials to date can be found on the Town Web site (www.town.arlington.ma.us) and the Symmes Advisory Committee Web site (www.symmesarlington.org).

The Redevelopment Board has taken very seriously its responsibility for identifying a developer to carry out the program unanimously approved by the 2003 Town Meeting and has been guided by the five commitments the Town set forth. The redevelopment of the former Symmes site is unprecedented in town history for its size and scope and for its considerable public processes. As residents of Arlington, we are proud of the extraordinary community effort – including three years of extensive public participation through hundreds of meetings of the Symmes Advisory Committee (SAC). The SAC working groups included members of the SAC, residents of the surrounding neighborhoods, and other interested citizens. The SAC formed additional sub committees and consulted professionals – all in public session, with tremendous input from the Arlington community.

We envision a lively discussion at Town Meeting. We hope that everyone understands that they may not get everything they want for this project. In that light, we hope Monday night will not be a time to reconsider the decisions made to date, but rather a time to move forward to meet the objectives of the Town.

The Board of Selectman in its Official Policy Statement regarding a debt exclusion vote to acquire the Symmes property set forth a series of commitments related to the overall goal of the Town to control development on the site. The mandate was designed to ensure that

redevelopment for the site would benefit the entire Town. The goals were intended to provide a framework for the Town's long-term needs and planning objectives. The five commitments of the Board can be summarized as follows:

- A balanced mixed-use redevelopment of predominately general office and some medical uses, with a limited residential component that includes affordable housing
- A redevelopment that is at least self-supporting, generating income to offset the costs of acquisition, renovation and maintenance
- Maintaining the parcel's present proportion of open space
- Promoting expanded health care services on the site
- An open planning process in which citizens and neighbors can participate in a visioning process

The SAC took those five commitments and worked with the community and professional consultants to develop a series of recommendations and requirements for the site. In issuing the request for proposals, the Redevelopment Board referenced the SAC report in its entirety as well as the Board of Selectmen's commitments to guide potential developers in preparing their proposals. After careful evaluation of experience and references, E.A. Fish was identified as the most qualified and responsive developer. As you may recall, the decision to tentatively designate E.A. Fish met with enthusiasm from the SAC, from a large group of neighbors and from the community at large.

Over the course of negotiations, the Redevelopment Board has been impressed with the Fish Team. They continue to take the commitments set forth by the Town very seriously, and have successfully met nearly all of the recommendations made by the SAC. Furthermore, despite challenging market conditions, we have witnessed E.A. Fish, with its partner, Menotomy Medical Associated, aggressively market to medical providers. To that end, E.A. Fish has identified a number of medical service providers that are interested in locating in the 40,000 square-foot Medical Center.

After careful analysis and vigorous debate, the members of the Redevelopment Board are unanimous in our support for the proposed redevelopment for the site. This is the time in the process that Town Meeting will make an important decision about the redevelopment of the site and we hope you will join us in our resolve. The rezoning of the site will allow the developer to move forward in its design process, file an application for a special permit, and begin to refine the design, and address many of the issues of significant concern to abutters that, until passage of the zoning and this stage in the process were not ripe for discussion.

The Town Meeting's job is to change the zoning so the development can happen. As your neighbors and as members of the Arlington Redevelopment Board, we ask you for your support and are confident this is a project the Town will be proud of even 100 years from now.

The Arlington Redevelopment Board