

Symmes Advisory Committee Interim Report

Town Meeting Members:

On March 31, 2001, in a Town-wide referendum, voters overwhelmingly approved the acquisition of the Symmes Hospital Campus via a debt-excluded financing, by a margin of 59% to 33%. The 2001 Annual Town Meeting, under Article 77, created the Symmes Advisory Committee to:

... Advise and assist the Board of Selectmen, the Town Manager, the Redevelopment Board and the Town Meeting in determining the appropriate uses for the Symmes Campus, and that the Committee is to be known as the Symmes Advisory Committee and shall report its recommendations to the 2002 Annual Town Meeting or such intervening Special Town Meeting if such recommendations are available.

The Symmes Advisory Committee consists of thirteen members, designated by Town Meeting, representing thirteen different committees, boards and interest groups in the Town. The Committee first met on June 14th, and has had ten meetings since that time.

The Committee adopted three strategic goals:

Endorse the general proposition to acquire the Symmes Property under fiscally appropriate conditions and endorse the use of Symmes Property under the principles outlined by the Board of Selectmen.

Given a fiscally viable assessment of the development potential of the site, undertake the appropriate actions to convince Town meeting to acquire the Symmes Property at the October 1, 2001 Special Town meeting.

Develop and implement a plan, using internal Town resources, broad community input and professional third party advisors including multiple options, if possible, which plan shall be presented to the Board of Selectmen by a date to be determined.

The Committee's operating philosophy is to provide a process that is open, transparent and inclusive to all of Arlington's citizens. To organize to effectively derive information from and distribute information to the Arlington community, the Committee decided to form two types of Working Groups, one of "subject-matter" focus and the other of "operational" focus. These working groups offer a broad mechanism to harness the energy, expertise and creativity of Arlington citizens volunteers.

Eight Working Groups were formed. Subject-matter Working Groups were formed for expertise and resources in Commercial Use, Public Use, Residential Use, and Medical Use of the Symmes Campus. In addition, Operational Working Groups were formed to provide support in the operating areas of Financial Analysis, Media Coordination, Message Coordination and Community Outreach.

At the beginning of August, the Messaging and Media groups initiated a broad outreach program to recruit interested citizens, Town employees and leaders throughout the Town

to participate. Information about the purpose and charter of the Committee and Working Groups was provided to news media, via a letter to Town departments, through announcements on cable TV, on the Town Web Site, and via direct mail to active citizens. The public was (and still is) invited and encouraged to participate.

Since June the Committee has adopted its strategic goals and citizen-participatory process to meet the policies of the Selectmen and the interests of Arlington's voters. Its eight working groups have been formed and have started meeting. More than thirty-five volunteers have added to the ranks of the original appointed Committee and the recruitment of citizens continues.

For reasons that will be explained to the Town Meeting by Town Counsel, the Town is not yet in a position to recommend the acquisition of the property.

When a firm proposal is available, the Committee will review it in detail, and after appropriate study and deliberation, will be prepared to make recommendation to Town Meeting within the policies outlined by the Board of Selectmen and presented to voters at the time of the debt-exclusion recommendation. Principal among the considerations will be the requirement for a revenue neutral or positive enterprise. If the recommendation is to acquire the property, it will include funds for the acquisition and operation of the property, and for the operating expenses of the Symmes Advisory Committee as well.

What the Symmes Advisory Committee can commit to you today is that the process for arriving at whatever recommendation it makes regarding the acquisition, as well as the development of plans and a recommendation for the ultimate disposition of the campus, will be through an open, transparent and inclusive process, and will conform to the policies and guidelines of the Board of Selectmen.

Respectfully submitted,
The Symmes Advisory Committee
October 1, 2001

Steve Andrew
Phyllis Bailey
Bob Carey
Elisabeth Carr-Jones
Steve DeCoursey, Secretary
Charlie Foskett, Chair
Frank Hurd
Alex Moschella
Linda Privitera
Eddie Randolph
Allen Reedy
Brian Rehrig, Vice Chair
David Walkinshaw

Advisors:
John Maher
Alan McClennen

Article 77, 2001 Annual Town Meeting

At the general Town Election on March 31, 2001, the Town supported the debt exclusion referendum to acquire the Symmes property by a vote of 4441 in favor to 2476 against, or by a margin of 59% to 33% after accounting for abstentions.. During the 2001 regular Town meeting, at the urging of the Board of Selectmen, Town meeting voted to pass Article 77, as amended by the Selectmen, as shown below. This article created the Symmes Advisory Committee.

CORINNE M. RAINVILLE
TOWN CLERK

ARTICLE 77
HOSPITAL

LAND ACQUISITION/SYMMES

VOTED: (QUORUM PRESENT)

That the Town hereby appoints a Committee to advise and assist the Board of Selectmen, and the Town Manager, the Redevelopment Board and the Town Meeting in determining the appropriate uses for the Symmes Campus, and that the Committee is to be known as the Symmes Advisory Committee and shall report its recommendations to the 2002 Annual Town Meeting or such intervening Special Town Meeting if such recommendations are available. The Committee shall consist of 13 individuals to be appointed as follows:

- One member to be appointed by the Arlington Chamber of Commerce
- One Town Meeting member with a financial or land development background to be appointed by the Arlington Board of Selectmen
- One member to be appointed by the Chair of the Finance Committee
- One member to be appointed by the Chair of the Capital Planning Committee
- One member to be appointed by the Open Space Committee
- One member to be appointed by the Affordable Housing Task Force
- One member to be appointed by the Vision 2020 Standing Committee
- One member to be appointed by the Selectmen's Transportation Committee
- One member to be appointed jointly by the Council on Aging, Assisted Living Task Force and the Arlington Seniors Association, each organization to have one vote
- One member to be appointed by the Brattle Hill Neighborhood Association
- One member of the medical community to be appointed jointly by the Symmes Corporation Board of Trustees and the Board of Trustees of the Sanborn Trust
- One member to be appointed by the Interfaith Council
- A representative of the Arlington Housing Authority to be appointed by the Authority.

And further voted the Committee will be by the provisions of Section 9 of Titled of the Bylaws except that the designee of the Capital Planning Committee will serve as temporary chairman and such member shall call the first meeting in accordance with the Open Meeting Law and see to its original organization.

A true copy of the vote under Article 77 of the Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting of the :
Town of Arlington at the session held May 21, 2001.

ATTEST:
Town Clerk

Arlington Selectmen Policy on the Symmes Acquisition

The following statement is the March 2001 Board of Selectmen's policy regarding the Symmes Acquisition:

The goal of the Town in acquiring the Symmes property is to control development of the site to the benefit of the entire Town, reflecting its long-term needs and planning objectives.

Without Town control, this site will inevitably be developed in a manner driven by market forces rather than guided by our community's best interest. Significant loss of open space would be likely; increased traffic and other adverse environmental effects could be felt well beyond the surrounding neighborhoods; a severe burden would be placed on Town budgets. Finally, the potential for maintaining and nurturing a health care presence at Symmes would be eliminated.

With Town ownership of the Symmes campus, the Town can control the destiny of the site. Preliminary studies show that the Town can benefit financially, as well as being able to ensure responsible and sensitive development. We ask the residents of Arlington to join us in making the following commitments to this project:

The Town commits to a balanced mixed-use redevelopment of predominately general of light office and some medical uses, with a limited residential component that includes affordable housing.

The Town commits to a redevelopment that is at least self-supporting, generating income (after a three to four year startup period) sufficient to offset the costs of acquisition, renovation and maintenance. We will apply all net income to reduce and eventually eliminate the added tax burden authorized by the debt exclusion. Any income available after satisfying this commitment will be available at the discretion of Town Meeting to help fund Town services.

The Town commits to maintaining the parcel's present proportion density of development only to gain limited affordable housing.

The town commits to maintaining the parcel's present proportion of open space, and to increasing its density of development only to gain limited affordable housing.

The Town commits to promoting expanded health care services on the site. With Lahey Clinic expecting to remain as a tenant, we will seek the recommendations of Arlington medical professionals and work with area health care institutions to promote additional outpatient services and other medical services.

The Town commits to an open planning process in which citizens and neighbors can participate in a visioning process, working with the Arlington Redevelopment Board (as the statutory "owner" of the parcel), the Town's Planning Department, and real estate management consultants to develop a final plan to be recommended to Town Meeting in Spring of 2002.

The present owners of the Symmes campus have indicated that they prefer to sell to the Town, but intend to sell privately if the Town does not act. We will have only one chance to gain public control of this critical parcel. If we acquire the property, Town Meeting -- should it later determine that public ownership was not in the Town's best interest -- could make the choice to resell it. If we let the initial opportunity pass, however, it will be gone forever. We urge the Town to take action.