

**SYMMES ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
ARLINGTON REDEVELOPMENT BOARD  
MINUTES  
January 23, 2003**

Bailey*	Dohan*	Reedy*	Worden*
Carey*	Foskett*	Rehrig*	
Carr-Jones*	Friedman*	Simmons	
DeCoursey	Greeley	Walkinshaw*	

\* Indicates Present

**Attendees:** ARB: Chaput, Faulkner, Lowenstein, Mann and Tsoi  
VHB: Schwartz, Karn, Mongeon  
AMS: Goldberg, Higgins and Robbins

**Participants:** John Maher, Town Counsel; Alan McClennen, Director of Planning and Community Development.

**Secretary's Note:** In my absence, the minutes for this meeting were taken by Ann LeRoyer, a member of the Public Use Working Group. On behalf of the SAC, I would like to thank Ms. LeRoyer for accepting this assignment and for providing the comprehensive minutes listed below.

Charles Foskett, Chairman of the SAC, called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

**Minutes**

On motion, the Committee approved the minutes of January 9, 2003.

**Resignation**

Mr. Foskett announced that Carolyn Simmons had resigned her position on the Committee as designee of the Board of Selectmen.

**Correspondence Received**

On motion, the Committee received correspondence from the Town's Open Space and Recreation Committees commenting on open space aspects of the present alternatives.

**MUWG Request**

Dr. Carey requested that the MUWG Report distributed on 1/22/03 be placed on the agenda of the next SAC meeting.

**Old Business**

Mr. Karn discussed the community/wellness center alternatives, especially with regard to parking and height issues, as well as brief mention of fundraising concerns. The proposed structures needed for the combined community and medical facilities take up approximately 101,000 square feet, which VHB proposes requires 270 parking spaces. VHB then presented four new sketches to accommodate some of this parking in the Summer Street woods area. The sketches also offered different configurations and heights of the buildings on the ridge to permit clear views from the overlook.

**Preparation for Public Hearing**

VHB and other consultants went through a "dry run" of their planned presentations at the February 13 public hearing. The four parts of the presentation were to be medical reuse, alternative reuse scenarios, financial analysis and site assessments.

Three AMS consultants presented different parts of their draft “white paper” on medical reuse and feasibility. They concluded that a community/wellness center would be the best option for the Symmes site, offering the highest probability of success with the lowest cost. However, they did not describe the actual characteristics or programming ideas of such a center (presumably using some of the ideas presented by the Public Use Working Group). Expansion of Lahey medical offices was also considered to have relatively high success, but higher costs. Emergency room, hospital and assisted living facilities were considered the least likely and most expensive alternatives. SAC members discussed the findings and presentation at length. More information is needed to define what is included in a potential wellness center and how it would be funded. Concerns were also expressed about how to present the medical use alternatives to the town, since some residents still want to see a hospital redeveloped on the site and do not fully understand the reasons why that is not feasible.

Mr. Karn presented the section on alternative reuse scenarios, beginning with summaries about the Selectmen’s mandates, the context of the site, a description of the four development zones (top, overlook, ridge, woods), goals and objectives, the iterative process of getting to the three “final” alternatives, guidelines for future plans, and sustainability issues. He showed many slides and graphic images, and at the public hearing will have new 3-D models of each alternative plan.

Mr. Mongeon presented numerous tables and graphs comparing the financial assumptions and results of his analysis of the three alternative redevelopment plans. He noted that it is difficult to determine accurate figures without more assumptions about the length of the phasing-in process, the results of the Developers’ Roundtable (scheduled in late January) and other data. For example, Alternative 3 includes an assisted living facility, but that proposal needs to be re-evaluated in light of AMS’s finding that such a facility is not feasible. Mr. Mongeon also expressed concerns about the size and nature of the community/wellness center and its financial breakeven projections.

Mr. Tsoi and other SAC and ARB members raised their concerns that the financial presentations and in fact all of the redevelopment options and descriptions were too complex and at the same time too uncertain for the general public to fully understand without extensive explanations. He urged one person from SAC to introduce and review the entire Symmes planning process and to outline the key issues, such as medical use constraints, possible public uses, the changing economic condition of the town and the state, and other factors that impact the future development options on the site.

The discussion was suspended by Mr. Foskett so the Cemetery Commission could make its scheduled presentation.

### **Cemetery Commission Presentation of Memorial Grove Concept**

Ms. DeBenedictis from the Department of Public Works, Ms. Hassler from the Cemetery Commission and Mr. Crispin from BSC Consulting Group presented a build-out drawing of a proposed “cremation garden” in the 4-acre Summer Street woods part of the Symmes site that could serve internment needs for up to 200 years. The site would be phased in gradually and the area would be landscaped as an arboretum. Minimal roads and pathways would allow access around the grove and up to the top of the hill. Photographs mounted on a board illustrated various types of designs and structures. There were questions about the financial risks and returns, but the presenters did not provide any specific financial analysis. Questions about parking and funeral processions were addressed by having funeral services at the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery chapel, thus limiting large groups in the grove.

### **Continued Discussion of the February 13 Public Hearing**

Mr. Foskett subsequently called for further discussion of the public presentation, and many SAC and ARB members expressed their concerns. A subcommittee of Ms. Friedman, Ms. Mann and Mr. Walkinshaw will meet to develop recommendations on how to conduct the February 13 meeting.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:30 pm.