



February 23, 2024

Chair Libby Garvey
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chair Garvey,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce strongly supports Items 24, 25, and 26 on the February 24 County Board Agenda, the three Requests to Advertise (RTAs) amendments to the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance as part of the second phase of the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative (CMRI). The Chamber strongly supports CMRI as a tool to meet our commercial vacancy challenges creatively and with flexibility. We were pleased to see these items on the Consent Agenda, and ask that the County Board pass the RTAs on Consent Agenda.

The Chamber was an enthusiastic proponent of the amendments for permitted uses that were the first focus of CMRI, as the Chamber viewed the amendments as modernizing Arlington County's Zoning Ordinance to better attract and retain businesses. The Chamber appreciates the focus on process evaluation and improvement in the second phase of CMRI, which will remove barriers and serve as a tool to ensure that Arlington is addressing the historically high commercial vacancy rate, which greatly impacts the County's budget.

The specific RTAs- concerning shared and off-site parking, athletic and health club parking minimums, and large media screens- are positive steps in the direction of greater flexibility for Arlington retail businesses. Broadening the ability of property owners and small businesses to meet parking requirements through shared parking, off-site parking, and reduced parking minimums addresses situations where businesses have insufficient parking and will help contribute to a healthier retail market. In addition, greater permission for large media screens in certain retail developments provides a positive asset for placemaking.

The Chamber looks forward to the opportunities proposed for the remainder of the second phase, including revisions to major, minor and administrative Site Plan amendments and greater flexibility on the sign ordinance. We hope to continue engagement with the County to ensure Arlington's regulations and processes fit the modern economic landscape, and we commend County Staff for their work on these ongoing efforts. We hope to continue the conversation on the second phase of CMRI, including these Zoning Ordinance amendments as they are considered before the County Board in April.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Bates". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Bates
President & CEO

CC: Vice-Chair Takis Karantonis; County Board Members Maureen Coffey, Susan Cunningham and Matt de Ferranti; County Manager Mark Schwartz; CPHD Director Samia Byrd; Planning Director Anthony Fusarelli; Marc McCauley, Arlington Economic Development; Jill Hunger, Arlington County Planning Division.