

John Long

From: Denise <denise.provost@verizon.net>
Sent: Monday, December 03, 2018 10:24 PM
To: John Long
Subject: Comments on proposed zoning ordinance
Attachments: Somerville 2018 Proposed zoning comments.docx

Dear Mr. Clerk:

Attached to this email are my comments on the proposed amended zoning ordinance now before the Board of Aldermen.

Would you please be so kind as to distribute my comments to each Alderman?

Thank you for your kind attention,

Denise Provost

Somerville 2018 Proposed Zoning – Comments to the Board of Aldermen

Submitted by Denise Provost, December 3, 2018

My general perspective is that while people who live in Somerville enjoy living at urban densities, Somerville's tight street system, limited open space, inadequate infrastructure, and years of over-building and over-paving cause a lot of friction at the neighborhood level. While the proposed revisions to our zoning ordinance reflect an immense amount of hard work, I believe that some aspects need more thought. Here are a few observations:

1) We should Put Somerville on a Density Diet, with plenty of Greens

I want to put on record my opposition to any provisions which would increase density more than minimally in Somerville other than in such redevelopment areas as Assembly Square, the southern side of Union Square, Brick Bottom, and Inner Belt. Somerville is already approximately 25 times as densely built as the Massachusetts average. We have close to the least amount of green space, parkland, and recreational space per capita of any community in the commonwealth, which is unhealthy for residents physically and mentally, and engenders un-neighborly competition for the little such space we have.

Simply increasing density in built up areas of the city will exacerbate this imbalance terribly. Our zoning should have far more robust open space requirements, which the city should enforce, and not waive. Only once Somerville has added significantly to its park and open space inventory should the city even consider adding density in the built-out parts of our city.

Even if Somerville does manage to create more green space, the inadequacy of our other infrastructure will remain another impediment to more dense development in the built-out city. The rights-of-way for our streets are narrow, leaving us with narrow sidewalks, and tight space for bicycles, street trees, utility lines, and other public uses. Under our streets, we have an old and notoriously leaky system of natural gas transmissions pipes. These streets, with few exceptions, were not laid out with grass verges, to allow for later expansion. Front yard setbacks tend to be shallow; any widening of streets in the historically settled portion of Somerville would require vast land takings and building demolition.

Here's one example how the new zoning ignores and would exacerbate these deficiencies: the new zoning maps propose to make the first six or so lots on the southwest side of Vernon Street (at Lowell) "Urban Residential (UR)," presumably because of its proximity to a new Green Line station, allowing for redevelopment of existing residences at significantly higher density. Yet Vernon Street - a two-way street - narrows towards the Lowell Street end to the width of a single vehicle - 30 feet of width, including sidewalks - for 434 feet, with only 190 linear feet of 40 foot wide right-of-way going towards the Central Street end, in front of the Rogers Foam factory, a large lot rezoned for fabrication.

2) Much of Somerville is Developmentally Constrained by its Original Street Grid

When Somerville was originally laid out in the 17th century, it consisted largely of farmlands, with a few clay pits and quarries. Several of our major roads date from this era, including our "rangeways": Franklin, Cross, Walnut, School, Central, and Lowell Streets, and Willow Avenue; as well as Broadway, Somerville Avenue, and Washington Street. The focus of the street system was not a travel-efficient

landscaping provisions seem impressive at first glance, but are probably too limited in scope to mean much, and will not matter much to the many parcels which will allow 90% to 100% coverage of lots. As it is, with the many residential conversions taking place all through the city, there seems to be an impulse to cover as much of the lot as possibly with building and pavement, presumably to avoid the dreaded chore of anyone having to install and maintain landscaping, beyond a meaningless fringe of sod and privet.

Sadly, I don't see in the "Sustainability" section any requirements for new parking facilities, whether structured or open lot, to install electric vehicle charging points. Perhaps it's somewhere else, and I missed it; I hope so. If it is not a requirement of the new zoning, it is a grievous omission, which should be rectified.

The proposed zoning has done an admirable job with the "Green Scores" concept, but doesn't go far enough towards other adaptations we should be making now. Except for existing parklands along the Mystic proposed to be zoned "Civic," there is no modification of the zoning maps to restrict further development in areas predicted to flood during storm surge events and as sea levels rise, though I'm fairly certain that Somerville has access to those maps. It's probably not yet taught as part of traditional city planning, but planning for climate change effects should be part of this big re-zoning effort.

4) Reconsider the Spotty UR Zoning in the New Maps

It has been explained to me that the UR parcels sprinkled throughout NR neighborhoods are meant to remedy existing nonconformities. Unfortunately, they do not do just that. The UR parcels – which look a lot like a rash of spot zoning to me – could be redeveloped up to UR standards, which I read as going up to 10 residential units, assuming other requirements can be met.

Locating UR parcels – seemingly at random – in NR neighborhoods has every potential to violate some of the very principles on which the new zoning is based. One of these is the announced intention to "provide distinct physical habitats at different scales, including the lot, block, and neighborhood, so that meaningful choices in living arrangement can be provided to residents with differing physical, social, and emotional needs." Having various 2 and 3 family homes in one's neighborhood potentially morph into 6 to 10 unit buildings would dramatically alter the scale of the existing neighborhood.

Creating so many UR parcels is also at odds, through the tear-down-and-redevelop incentive it poses, with the avowed intent of the new zoning to "preserve and enhance the existing character of Somerville's traditional housing and respect existing built form and development patterns." Imagine every UR parcel at full build-out, and you will see why.

5) Rethink and Clarify the Creation/Conversion of Accessory Apartments/Structures/Units

Right now, these concepts in the new zoning are confused and confusing. The key term "accessory apartment" for instance, does not appear in the definitions section, but only the Article on Uses. At the time I submitted comments to the Planning Board, I hadn't found a definition for it, or for "household living," another fundamental piece of terminology, which is likewise tucked under Use, and not repeated in Definitions.

The proposed zoning would allow all detached and semi-detached residences, even in NR zones, *as of right*, to have "accessory apartments." It is unclear to be why this provision would be better than the

existing zoning, which allows even single family dwellings in “Residence A” zones to be turned into two-family dwellings, as of right. There’s also some ambiguity as to what makes an accessory apartment so different from just another dwelling unit.

I’ll intersperse in red my questions about the proposed definition:

“b. Accessory Apartment The accessory apartment accessory use category includes the residential occupancy of a dwelling unit that is subordinate to an owner-occupied Household Living principal use on the same lot.”

What does “subordinate” mean in this context? Smaller? Rented? Both? What happens to the accessory apartment of the owner-occupant moves out? Or sells the property? Does it cease to be a legitimate accessory apartment? How is the city possibly going to enforce the complex new definition of an “owner-occupied Household Living principal use”? Are Building Inspectors going to ask for marriage licenses, birth certificates, and other legal documents? (“Household Living Residential occupancy of a building or portion of a building in dwelling units by any number of persons related by blood, marriage, adoption, or foster care agreement and up to three (3) additional unrelated persons living together as a single housekeeping unit. Rental of a dwelling unit for less than thirty (30) consecutive days requires compliance with all City Ordinances. Residential occupancy of an accessory building type is permitted only in conjunction with a Household Living principal use on the same lot in accordance with §9.2.2.10.b Accessory Apartments.”)

What about the household composition changes, through divorce, death, children growing up, etc? Does that de-legitimize the accessory apartment? How does it even make sense to define an accessory apartment in terms of the occupancy and household description of another dwelling unit? What public purpose is served by defining an accessory apartment in this way?

“The following standards apply: i. No more than one (1) accessory apartment use is permitted per lot. ii. Accessory apartments must be owned by an owner-occupant of another dwelling unit on the same lot.”

First of all, it is problematic that there is no definition of “accessory apartment” in the proposed zoning apart from the “standards.” Sub-subsection ii simply repeats the definitional requirement that “Accessory apartments must be owned by an owner-occupant of another dwelling unit on the same lot.” What happens if the owner-occupants files a condominium master deed on the whole property, and sells the accessory apartment into separate ownership? Or sells to property to a buyer who does? Does Somerville believe that it can enjoin a property owner from filing a condominium master deed, in compliance with Massachusetts law? How would the city enforce such a “standard”? What would the penalty be?

“ iii. The property owner must occupy the associated Household Living use or the accessory apartment. iv. The total number of individuals residing within an accessory apartment and the associated Household Living use on the same lot may not exceed the number permitted by §9.2.10.a Household Living.”

Again, how would this “standard” be enforced? Does the city expect to bring legal actions against property owners to reduce the number of people living in a premises? Because accessory apartments are allowed as of right, a property owner could presumably go to Inspectional Services and pull a permit to construct such a unit - would Building Inspectors condition the issuance of a permit on a description of who would be living there? On a sworn oath that the owner-occupant is not going to move away, or

sell the property? Are these “standards” actually conditions, or meaningless suggestions? As I previously queried, are Building Inspectors going to ask for marriage licenses, birth certificates, and other legal documents? If so, I think that’s an intrusion on personal privacy, an unwarranted micromanagement of people’s living arrangements, and probably beyond the scope of the city’s authority under chapter 40A of the Massachusetts General Laws.

“v. No additional parking is required for an accessory apartment.”

What if the owner-occupant wants to provide additional parking – it is permitted to pave more of the unbuilt surface to provide more parking? Would the city stop any additional paving?

“vi. In its discretion to approve or deny a special permit authorizing an accessory apartment, the review board shall consider, at least, the following: a). The review considerations for all Special Permits as specified in §15.2.1.e. Review Criteria. b). Location, visibility, and design of the principal entrance to the accessory apartment. c). Path of access to the accessory apartment and the privacy of residents and neighboring properties. d). Location of loading, trash and recycling storage.”

In the Use Table of 9.1, accessory apartments are permitted in NR districts, but not permitted in any other district: “Accessory Apartment P N N N N N N N N N N (\$9.2.13.b)” So, where does the Special Permit Process come in? According to the Use table, accessory apartments are permitted by Special Permit in no districts of the proposed zoning, and no Special Permit can be required for an as-of-right use.

One last point: there is a bill currently pending in the legislature, H. 4290, which Governor Baker is pressing to have passed in the informal session, which would add a new definition of accessory apartment to MGL chapter 40A, the Zoning Act: “SECTION 2. Section 1A of chapter 40A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the introductory paragraph the following 9 definitions:- “Accessory dwelling unit”, a self-contained housing unit, inclusive of sleeping, cooking and sanitary facilities on the same lot as a principal dwelling, subject to otherwise applicable dimensional and parking requirements, that: (i) maintains a separate entrance, either directly from the outside or through an entry hall or corridor shared with the principal dwelling sufficient to meet the requirements of the state building code for safe egress; (ii) is not larger in floor area than 1/2 the floor area of the principal dwelling or 900 square feet, whichever is smaller; and (iii) is subject to such additional restrictions as may be imposed by a municipality, including but not limited to additional size restrictions, owner-occupancy requirements, and restrictions or prohibitions on short-term rental of accessory dwelling units.”

I don’t know whether this bill will be adopted in this form before the Somerville Planning Board and Board of Aldermen vote on the proposed ordinance. I personally find problems with this definition, particularly its size restrictions. It does at least, however, attempt to describe the thing which it intends to describe, the accessory apartment. If adopted, this definition would put certain provisions of the proposed Somerville “standards” for accessory apartments squarely into conflict with state law.

The House 4290 definition quoted above at least reflects a visualization of what and where an accessory apartment would be. Because the word “accessory” makes me think of items of apparel, I’ve come to think of “accessory apartments” as being in the following locational categories: “hat” apartments (in the top or attic floors), “shoe” apartments (in the basement), and “handbag” apartments (in or on top of an

outbuilding, such as a garage.) Accessory apartments under the roof of the principle residential structure seem to me simply to be additional units – I don't see why they even would be considered "accessory," because they belong in the same use category as the principle use, which is residential.

Accessory apartments in accessory *structures*, however, are necessarily in a different category. Since, under previous zoning, garages have been permitted as of right on residential lots, with no setbacks whatever, their conversion from accessory use to principal use (residential) brings into consideration the kinds of impacts more suited to evaluation through the Special Permit process. I think it would be a mistake to allow as-of-right conversions of accessory structures into residential units, however characterized.

Before allowing such a zoning change – and I ask that you not do so - please think hard about what degree of development would be permitted. Could a one story garage be turned into a two story accessory apartment? Could a three-bay garage be turned into three accessory apartments? Of what height? What if digging the foundation/ laying utilities for the converted accessory apartment will cause damage to a neighbor's house/fence/landscaping/utilities, etc? If the permit for the conversion is issued "as of right," does the neighbor have any right to object to the city's issuance of the permit? Any legal recourse? Could the neighbor sue the city, as well as the property owner developing the "accessory apartment"?

6) Eliminate Confusion Surrounding Accessory Apartments/Structures/Units

Definitions must be the building blocks of any understanding of law, but the proposed Somerville zoning is muddled when it comes to describing what is "accessory." That's why I introduced the analogies to articles of attire, to try to make this abstract concept concrete. Not only is the proposed definition of an Accessory *Structure* in Article 16 way too abstract, I think it may embody an error, as it is: "Any structure designed, arranged, used, or occupied per the provisions of Article 6.B." I have not yet been able to locate "Article 6.B," but it doesn't seem to be in Article 6, which has four subparts, and governs Commercial Districts.

This definition itself suggests a regulatory structure possibly at odds with that contemplated by 10.1.b., which states that "[a]ccessory structures are permitted by-right." That subsection itself seems to conflict with the subsection just prior to it (10.1.a.), which states that "[All] development, excluding normal maintenance, requires the submittal of a development review application to the Building Official and the issuance of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance prior to the issuance of a Building Permit or Certificate of Occupancy." There is guidance for building officials as to what is an accessory structure, but it's not entirely clear that the list of 23 such structures in 10.2 is an exhaustive list, or whether other unlisted structures may also be found to fall into the accessory category.

If I were a property owner trying to understand how to put an accessory apartment on my property, would I properly conclude that it wouldn't be an accessory structure, but an "Accessory Use"? In Article 16, "Accessory Use" is defined as a "use(s) of a lot, structure or portion thereof that is incidental and related to a principal building or use of land and located on the same lot as the principal building or use of land." This definition suggests that an "accessory apartment" could be both an "Accessory Use," and an "Accessory Structure;" and if the latter, something which could be built (or converted) as of right, and presumably subject only to the 3 foot setbacks which seem to be the only dimensional requirements for "Accessory Structures."

At least one alderman I spoke to was convinced that the new zoning would allow property owners to convert existing garages into accessory apartments. I could not find obvious rules for doing so, but I could well be missing something. What I was able to find regarding “accessory” anything, however, was confusing, and makes me wonder how well thought-out this additional density-driver actually may be.

7) Other Accessory Use Details which Need More Thought

In 9.2.b of the proposed zoning, “Arts Exhibition” will be prohibited in both NR and UR zones – basically, prohibited in any neighborhood. “Arts Exhibition” is defined as the “production, rehearsal, or live performance of cultural entertainment or artistic expression such as singing, dancing, comedy, literary readings, performance art, musical theater, live plays, and concerts. The arts exhibition category includes venues such as assembly halls, auditoriums, cinemas, concert halls, dinner theaters, gallery space, performance halls, rehearsal & preproduction studios, live theaters, and their substantial equivalents along with the administrative offices, booking agencies, and ticket sales of performing arts organizations.”

Because it includes “live... artistic expression,” it will literally make it unlawful for people to sing, play the piano, practice the clarinet, or read aloud in their homes – and while many in the city would love to shut down Porchfest, Open Studios exhibits in residences would become similarly illicit. I doubt this was an intended consequence; the section should be re-drafted to allow for personal artistic expressions, musical or literary gatherings with friends, and perhaps also for participation in civic or spontaneous events – like the wedding party which walked down my street this summer, led by a HONKI-style band.

8) Affordable Housing Production

I have already stated why I oppose cranking up the allowable density of building in Somerville. For those reasons, I do not support a higher-density affordable housing overlay district, I do support the following changes to the zoning ordinance which will enhance the creation of affordable housing units:

- The requirement inclusionary affordable units should apply when there is “substantial rehabilitation” of a building, not just new construction.
- I support amendment of 12.1.3 to cover inclusionary rentals, and of amendment of 12.1.5 to increase the provision of family-sized affordable dwelling units.
- I support amendment of 12.17 to require that in-lieu payments actually be made to the city before permits or certificates of occupancy are granted.

While I certainly have other thoughts about the proposed ordinance, I think I will stop now, and thank you for taking my comments, and for considering them.

John Long

From: Tori Antonino <toriantonino@me.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 05, 2018 6:47 PM
To: Peter Forcellese; City Clerk Contact
Subject: Optics on the Open Space plan presented in Land Use on

Please put the following email into the record on the item of the zoning overhaul.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Tori Antonino <toriantonino@me.com>
Date: December 5, 2018 at 6:43:49 PM EST
To: planning@somervillema.gov
Cc: GProakis@somervillema.gov, slewis@somervillema.gov, dbartman@somervillema.gov,
kstelljes@somervillema.gov, mwoods@somervillema.gov, convivial@rcn.com,
reneetscott@gmail.com, katjana@katjana.org
Subject: Optics

Hello Planning,

The amount of work you did putting that presentation together last night was amazing. I don't think I can appreciate enough the work you do. Your thoroughness and dedication to the community process is setting a huge new standard for governance. I am grateful to be on this journey with you. I think it is historical.

So...

What was that last night! I thought it was going to be a presentation on how we will achieve our 125 acres of new open space, not how the goal is unrealistic and here are all the reasons why we won't be able to do it...oh, and, by the way, we are redoing SOMERVISION next year where we will re-examine our goals and change them if we need to.

About 6 (8?) weeks Lance Davis asked the city to present to the aldermen the plan to achieved our 125 acres of open space goal. Around the same time the city staff begin preparing for a redo of SOMERSION.

Does this just a coincidence? Really? Because it seems transparent.

At the same time as I am impressed by the amount of work you guys, especially Dan, Melissa, Kristen, Sarah (and whoever I missing), I am disappointed that the presentation felt like a 'why we can't do it' rather than a 'let's figure out how we do it.'

I mean, perhaps those are the marching orders? If that is true, then we have a much larger problem, than a disappointing, albeit informative, presentation.

I am fiercely in the camp and that we figure out our 125 acre goal, not scrap it. A suggestion from Fred Berman is that we interlace the open space requirement with the green score. It is an interesting thought that should be examined.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication to the community process,

Tori

Advocate and partner with the city

BLATMAN, BOBROWSKI & HAVERTY, LLC

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

9 DAMONMILL SQUARE, SUITE 4A4
CONCORD, MA 01742
PHONE 978.371.3930
FAX 978.371.3928

MARK BOBROWSKI
Mark@bbhlaw.net

December 11, 2018

TO: Somerville Board of Aldermen
FR: Mark Bobrowski
RE: Zoning Recodification
325 Alewife Brook Parkway

Please be informed that I represent 325 Alewife Brook Parkway Realty Trust. I would like to take this opportunity to express the Trust's opposition to classification of its property at that location (the "Property") as Urban Residential ("UR") in the latest proposed zoning map (September 26, 2018). This topic was also addressed in my Memorandum to the Planning Board, submitted November 26, 2018.

The earlier version of the proposed zoning map (June 14, 2017) indicated that the Property would be reclassified as Mid-Rise 3 - MR3. In that regard, the Property was treated the same as the other nearby gas stations located at 395 Alewife Brook Parkway, 379 Alewife Brook Parkway, and 166 Boston Avenue, all classified as MR3 in the 2017 and 2018 proposals. See the attached 2017 and 2018 maps. The Property is the southernmost MR3 property on the 2017 map. That made sense. The parcels are all relatively the same size: 395 Alewife Brook Parkway has 0.45 acres, 379 Alewife Brook Parkway has 0.46 acres, 166 Boston Road has 0.33 acres, and 325 Alewife Brook Parkway has 0.40 acres. All are corner lots. All have gas stations today. All are located on Alewife Brook Parkway or Mystic Valley Parkway.

Without any rational basis to distinguish the treatment of the Property from these other gas station sites, the Planning Board may be engaged in "reverse spot zoning." This occurs when a parcel is singled out for disparate treatment without any legitimate government purpose in mind. See, e.g. *Canteen Corp. v. City of Pittsfield*, 4 Mass. App. Ct. 289 (1976).

Unless the Planning Board can point to some rational relation to a permissible government objective, I respectfully request that the Property be classified again as MR3 when the Board of Aldermen votes on the zoning revisions.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

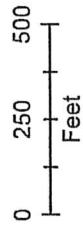
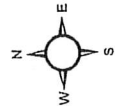
cc: Katjana Ballantyne, Ward 7 Alderwoman (by email)
Frank Wright, City Solicitor (by email)

CITY OF
SOMERVILLE, MA
OFFICIAL PROPOSED
ZONING

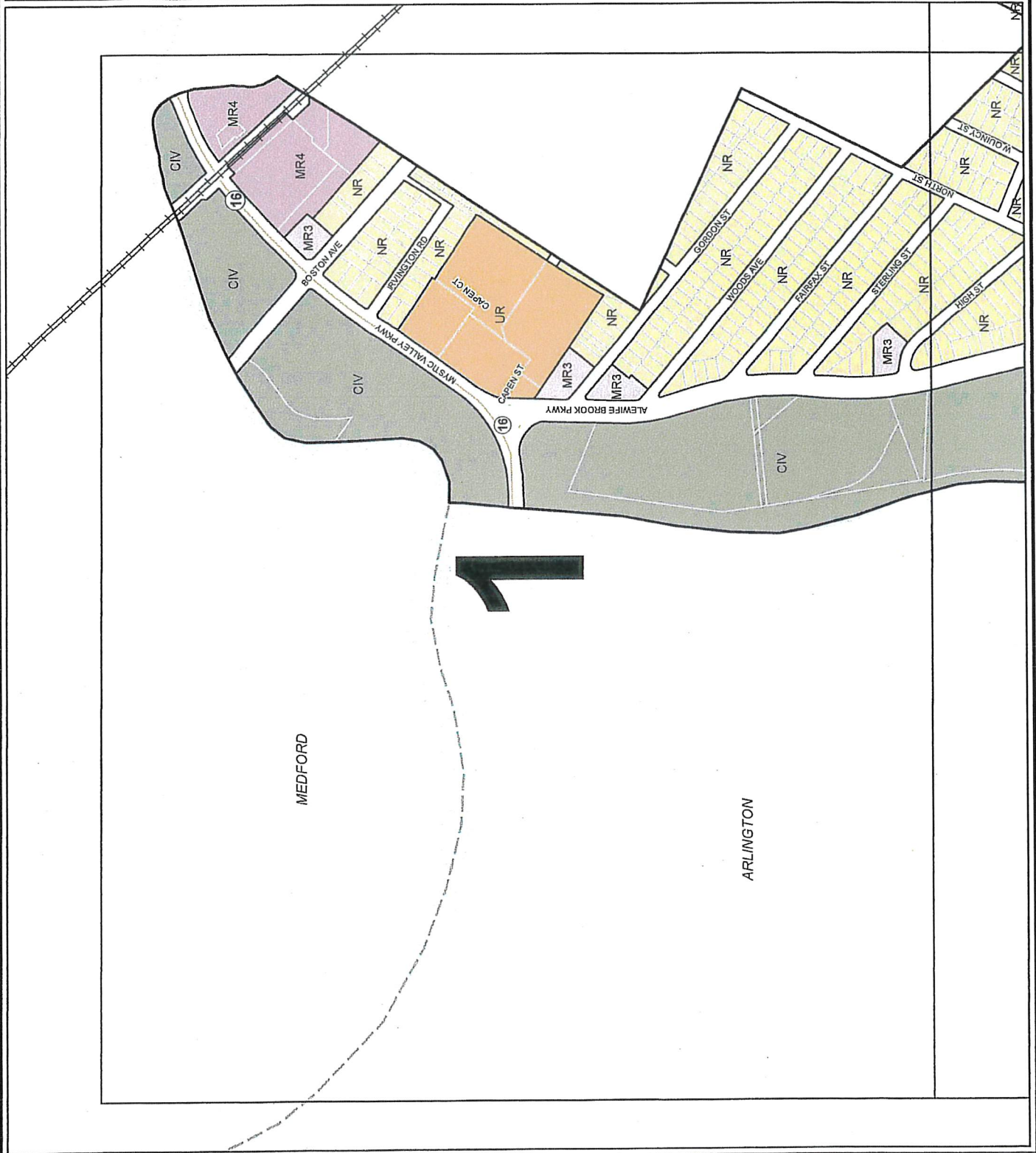
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NR
UR
MR3
MR4
CIV



Date: June 14, 2017



CITY OF
SOMERVILLE, MA
OFFICIAL PROPOSED
ZONING

(UNADOPTED)

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NR

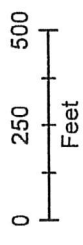
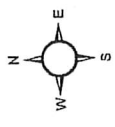
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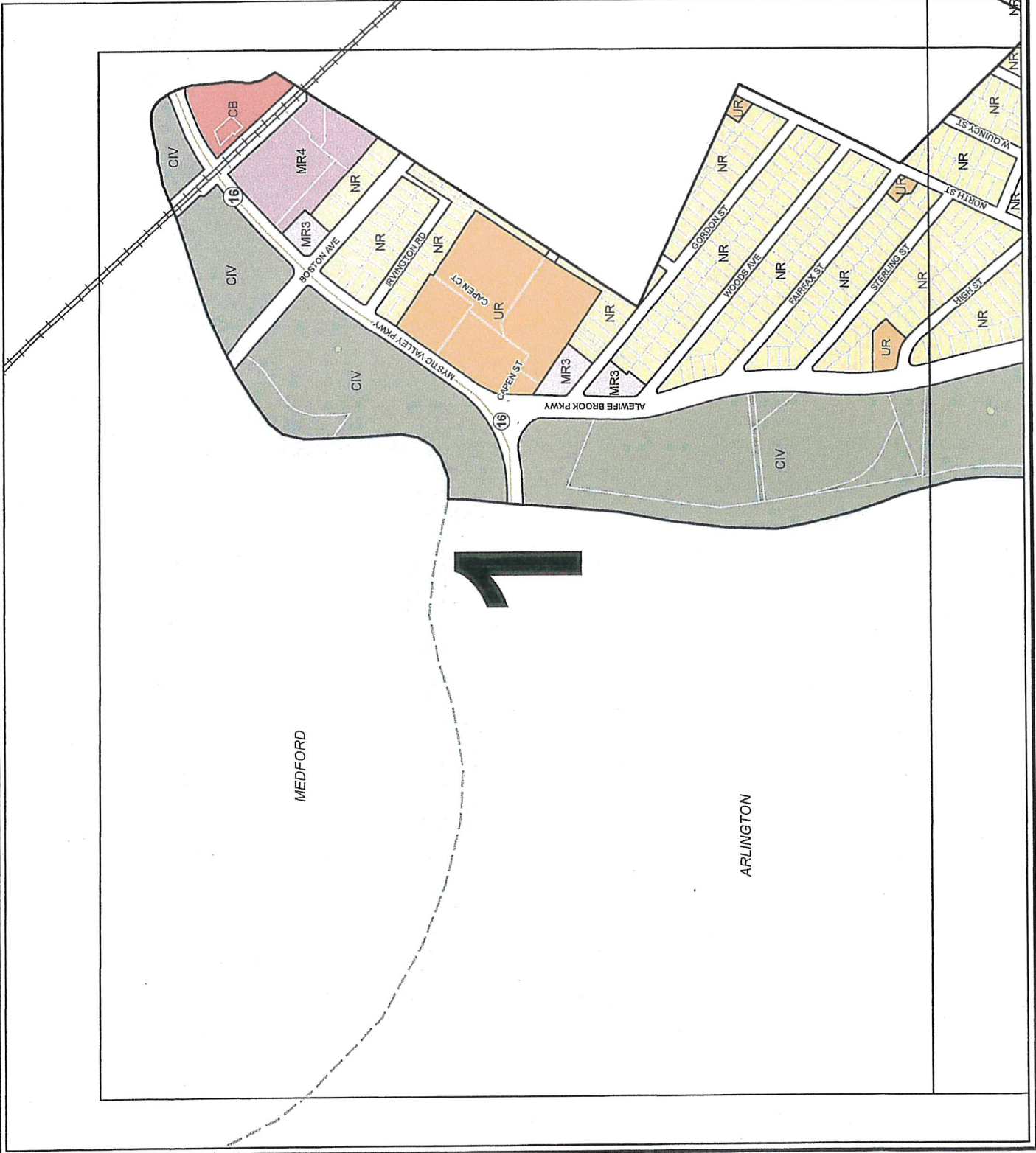
MR4

CIV

CB



Date: September 26, 2018



From: [Sara Krakauer](#)
To: [City Clerk Contact](#)
Subject: Proposed Zoning Changes
Date: Tuesday, December 11, 2018 6:55:38 PM

Dear Board of Aldermen,

I am writing to express concern about the proposed changes in zoning, and I ask for a “no” vote. I agree with Rep. Provost that something better needs to be drafted. The current plan has a lot of issues, such as not prioritizing green space. In addition, many Somerville residents do not fit traditional standards for a “household” and I think young people living in community is an essential part of the city, and allows many people to live here despite the high rents. It’s important that the way the zoning is written allows for non-traditional housing structures.

I’ve lived in Somerville since 2004 and hope that you come up with a plan that is more transparent and better meets the needs of our city’s residents.

Thank you,
Sara Krakauer

**LAW OFFICES of
RICHARD G. Di GIROLAMO**

Attorneys at Law
424 Broadway
Somerville, MA 02145
~~~~~

Tel: (617) 666-8200  
Fax (617) 776-5435

Richard G. Di Girolamo  
Anne M. Vigorito, Of Counsel

2018 DEC 12 P 3:23

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE  
SOMERVILLE, MA

Michael LaRosa, Of Counsel

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December 11, 2018

Alderman Lance Davis, Chairman, Land Use Committee  
City of Somerville Board of Aldermen  
93 Highland Avenue  
Somerville, MA 02145

RE: 13 Garfield Avenue, Somerville, Massachusetts—Dean Matarazzo  
Map/Block/Lot: 89/L/12  
Zoning Map Change Request

This office is counsel to Dean Matarazzo, relative to the property he owns at 13 Garfield Avenue, Somerville, Massachusetts. At this time our client respectfully requests a map change regarding the proposed zoning overhaul for the City of Somerville.

The property is currently in an IP Zoning District. The property is a small vacant industrial warehouse which abuts a pasta company operated by the property owner.

The proposed Zoning District for this parcel is Fabrication. This zoning designation for the site as Fabrication is not appropriate as the parcel that borders it has been given a UR zoning classification. The UR zoning classification would make better use of the site and would fit into the concept of the proposed zoning especially in this part of East Somerville. This is consistent with the East Somerville Neighborhood Plan and the Somervision goal of adding housing units. This area has now established more residential development. The fabrication designation would generate projects that would not be harmonious with the this changing corridor of East Somerville

Should any further information be necessary for this request please contact our office.

Very truly yours,

  
Richard G. Di Girolamo

**LAW OFFICES of  
RICHARD G. Di GIROLAMO**

Attorneys at Law  
424 Broadway  
Somerville, MA 02145

~~~~~  
Tel: (617) 666-8200
Fax (617) 776-5435

2018 DEC 12 P 3:23

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE
SOMERVILLE, MA
Michael LaRosa, Of Counsel

Richard G. Di Girolamo
Anne M. Vigorito, Of Counsel

December 12, 2018

Alderman Lance Davis, Chairman, Land Use Committee,
City of Somerville Board of Aldermen
93 Highland Avenue
Somerville, MA 02145

RE: 379 Alewife Brook Parkway, Somerville, Massachusetts—Sciucco Family Trust
Map/Block/Lot: 3/C/1
Zoning Map Change Request

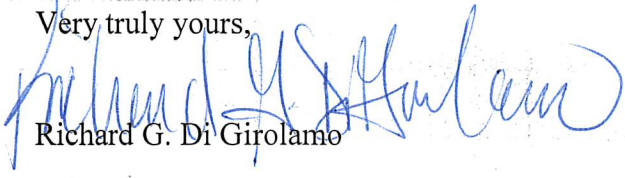
This office is counsel to The Sciucco Family Trust, relative to the property they own at 379 Alewife Brook Parkway, Somerville, Massachusetts. At this time our client respectfully requests a map change regarding the proposed zoning overhaul for the City of Somerville.

The property is currently in an NB Zoning District. The property is currently gas station with a convenience store, at the corner of Alewife Brook Parkway and Gordon Street.

The proposed Zoning District for this parcel is MR3. This zoning designation for the site is restrictive for a parcel that would be a greater asset to the neighborhood as a MR4 or MR5 Zoning District. The site is on a major throughway, Alewife Brook Parkway. There are other MR4 zoning districts along the same corridor. Moreover, the site is in close proximity to a future MBTA Green Line Station, at the corner of Boston Avenue and Alewife Brook Parkway. The future Green line stop will promote pedestrian activity. Gordon Street and Woods Avenue are both one-way streets which do not allow one to enter at Alewife Brook Parkway. Therefore, 379 Alewife Brook Parkway presents an opportunity for higher density with ground floor commercial and residential units above and at a scale which will not interfere with the neighborhood located behind it. Moreover, there are several similar proposed projects that are slated for this area of Alewife Brook Parkway.

Should any further information be necessary for this request please contact our office.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard G. Di Girolamo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "D".

Richard G. Di Girolamo

December 13, 2018

To the Honorable Aldermen of the City of Somerville

This letter contains my feedback on Somerville's proposed new zoning code.

I would like to first express my appreciation and thanks to all the people who have worked to create the draft code currently under consideration. This is a monumental task that will shape our city for many years to come. I am deeply grateful for their efforts.

Commit to our strategy

The zoning code is a rare opportunity for the city to articulate its aspirations in a formal and binding way. Unlike the white-papers produced by working groups, statements of strategy, or even proclamations and orders passed by the Board of Aldermen, our zoning code has a concrete and immediate legal impact.

This is critical in light of the Curtatone Administration's recent admission that we have failed to implement Open Space and other goals articulated in the SomerVision strategy document from 2012. Had we, instead, encoded the SomerVision goals in amendments to the zoning code, Somerville might today be substantially greener, cooler, and more open and welcoming.

Over time, people will naturally seek exemptions and loopholes in whatever we adopt. Moderating these compromises and stewarding our ideals will be the job of our demolition, design, and zoning review boards for years to come.

I urge you to give great weight to the needs of the current and the future residents of Somerville. These should be prioritized above any ease or consideration for developers, external investors, or others who seek to profit off the sale or conversion of our city. Our city does not exist merely to profit corporations or fuel development. The business opportunities that we lose by living up to our civic ideals were bad deals to begin with.

I urge you to aim high in this zoning code. Codify our ambitions, hopes, and dreams for the aspirational Somerville of the future.

Commit to the Urban Residential districts:

- **Replace minimum parking with maximum parking:** Somerville's major transit corridors are nearly impassable at rush hour, even now. We must not increase density at the cost of further congestion. Residents who choose to live in the urban corridors of Somerville should expect to live in an urban manner, using transit, bicycling, and walking.
- **Remove minimum unit size requirements:** Somerville will never, by itself, address the entirety of the greater Boston area's housing crisis. However, in our densest housing districts, we should push hard to see what the market will bear, rather than artificially limiting units based on square footage minimums.

- Minimize exemptions: I encourage you to push back on residents who are campaigning for exceptions on a building by building basis. Making these districts coherent will allow urban planners to make good, simple plans for improvements to our transit infrastructure.

Commit to our neighborhoods:

- Set limits on density in neighborhood districts: Just as we commit to density in our urban residential districts, we should commit to neighborhood life in our neighborhood residential districts. We have all seen the growth of big-box condominiums on side streets, paved yards for parking, and so on. Multi-generational Somerville needs a diverse housing stock, not a uniform dense urban sprawl. Residents will need to decide whether they want to live in an urban or a neighborhood part of Somerville. It is your job to ensure that both kinds of district still exist in 50 years.
- Protect our mature trees: Somerville is in the process of losing what few mature trees we still have. Once these are gone, we will be unable to replace them. The “green score” section of the zoning places high value on pre-existing trees. To this, please add a look-back provision that will discourage developers from clear-cutting a lot prior to submitting plans. Also, please require a permit for the removal of any significant trees, perhaps defined as 24” or greater diameter. If we can require permits for outbuildings and sheds, we can certainly regulate the removal of 50 and 100-year old trees.

Commit to our ideals:

- Remove all mention of family: A civic zoning code is no place to define a family. If the goal of a regulation is to prevent illegal sublets or dangerous overcrowding, please find a way to state that goal directly and clearly.
- Be bold when it comes to affordability: The current regulations around affordable housing are obviously inadequate. In order to meet the needs of the community, we need to support a diverse set of ideas.

Thank you for your consideration.

Chris Dwan
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