



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

CLERK OF COMMITTEES

April 30, 2019

REPORT OF THE LAND USE COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Lance L. Davis	Chair	Present	
William A. White Jr.	Vice Chair	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	
Stephanie Hirsch	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Ward Two City Councilor	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Absent	

The meeting was held in the Council Chamber and was called to order by Chairman Davis at 6:09pm and adjourned at 9:05pm. Councilor McLaughlin was absent due to a dental procedure.

Others present: Dan Bartman - OSPCD; George Proakis - OSPCD; Kimberly Wells - Assistant Clerk of Committees

Chairman Davis shared that the next meeting on May 14th will address issues related to affordable housing.

206747: Requesting the adoption of a New Zoning Ordinance (9/2018 update) to supersede the current Zoning Ordinance as originally adopted on March 23, 1990.

The item is the third revision of the proposed overhaul, with a fourth version coming soon, to be followed by a public hearing. Mr. Bartman shared a presentation (which can be found at www.somervillezoning.com) with an updated timeline and asked all of the Ward Councilors to provide updates to their respective ward maps by May 15th.

Mr. Bartman reviewed the proposed policy and amendments, beginning with an overview of transit oriented development, which typically has limited parking and policies to induce transit ridership and reduce dependence on automobiles. The cost to build parking is handed down to the tenant, regardless of whether it is commercial or residential. Parking policies can help achieve the SomerVision goals, and should be used to do so.

Matthew Smith, Parking Consultant with Nelson Nygaard, shared a history of the Residential Parking Permit Program in Somerville. The current structure leads to a scarcity of on-street parking. Households

in multi-unit buildings are less likely to have a permit, so those areas with few multi-unit buildings have the highest permit densities (West Somerville, Ball Square, Winter Hill/Magoun Square). Similarly, future GLX areas have the highest existing parking permit densities. Councilor White requested that this be compared to registered vehicles per acre. He also confirmed that households are defined as each unit. Councilors Rossetti and Hirsch expressed concerns with using the census data, which does not properly account for unrelated adults in a household, in the calculations. Councilor Scott also noted that only 15% of Somerville residents work in Somerville, so there is often a need for even related households to have multiple parking permits in order to drive separately to their respective jobs.

To reduce automobile dependence, the policies must extend further than parking, including availability of goods and services. Un-bundling parking (i.e. charging separately for a parking space rather than including it within the rent) may also disincentivize automobile use. Councilor White shared a concern that we want to be cautious not to overburden workers who don't have jobs near transit and will need a vehicle regardless of where they live, as well as those in affordable housing or with mobility needs.

President Ballantyne asked for clarification on the example of Maxwell's Green and Mr. Proakis shared that most vehicles were parking in the garage, but many got a parking permit as well, to allow them to park on the street throughout the City. A small amount (approximately 10-15) only had a parking permit, and chose not to park in the garage. Councilor Clingan noted that if we are incentivizing residents to move toward using transit more than they currently are, the trains need to be in a position to handle this additional traffic, or we risk pushing people back to cars.

Mr. Smith cited several case studies to highlight various ways to restrict residential parking permits - by zones, households, for buildings with off-street parking, or utilizing tiered pricing. Mr. Bartman also clarified that these policies are designed to affect new residents, and they would not necessarily be imposed on current residents. Councilor Scott expressed that there is a struggle between adding density and the technological implications of restricting parking. Mr. Proakis shared that technology should not prevent us from choosing the right policy solution. Councilor Rossetti asked for more information about guest permits. Mr. Smith shared that an option might be to move to requiring a registration and a fee per vehicle, rather than a simple placard that can be used in any vehicle.

President Ballantyne requested that the administration provide a timeline for when changes could be made within Traffic & Parking and whether a retroactive implementation could be made as well.

Councilor Niedergang clarified that the recommendations for adapting existing buildings would not be part of this specific overhaul, but are things that could be considered and phased in at a later time.

Councilor Scott noted that there has been no mention of business parking permits and wondered whether that would be an item for consideration. Mr. Bartman confirmed that this has not yet been addressed, but is on the agenda for the Parking Working Group. Further, there is nothing within the Zoning Ordinance that regulates street parking, so this would be a companion policy, and another commercial companion policy could be introduced and considered separately.

Mr. Bartman continued to discuss minimum parking requirements, and noted issues with the literature on parking, which is often related to vastly different land-use areas. Some recommendations that make more sense for Somerville include: removing minimum requirements for off-street parking; charging the right price for on-street parking; and reinvesting parking revenues to improve transportation and parking. Research shows that topography matters little with walking to transit for work, but weather is a significant factor.

Mr. Bartman detailed the transit areas on the map and noted that there is an exemption for small businesses (under 5,000 sq.ft.) in the proposed ordinance. Councilor Hirsch noted that parking lots often create dangerous situations. Councilor Rossetti clarified that there is no accessory parking allowed in overlay districts, and all parking will be on a fee basis. Councilor Niedergang asked for information depicted visually on where the various minimum parking requirements exist. Councilor Scott asked

whether there was a waiver process and Mr. Bartman noted that there is a proposed special permit, which would allow for a waiver of either a minimum or maximum depending on circumstances.

The administration does not support the amendment reducing the GLX transit areas to 1/4 mile. The time period for new development to open in conjunction with the GLX is already underway, and granting parking permits would undermine the goals to reduce traffic and parking. The Planning Board should review all proposed parking through the site plan approval process. Councilor White suggested that this be specifically included in the procedures for site plan approval, rather than accepted as a norm.

Mr. Bartman shared that district parking maximums generally don't account for varied use over the course of a day. The Urban Land Institute's Shared Parking Model offers formulas used to help calibrate this usage to local conditions. This was utilized to calculate demand for neighborhood planning.

Chairman Davis asked what Mr. Bartman needs from the Committee in order to finalize the next version. Mr. Bartman noted that he will move forward with the restrictions on parking permits in transit areas if there is support for such. Councilor Niedergang noted that he would withdraw the amendment if there is a promise to eliminate on-street parking in transit-oriented districts. He asked further for more information about what the 5,000 sq.ft. commercial exemption looks like in practice. Councilors Ewen-Campen and Scott expressed an eagerness to move forward with this and Councilor Hirsch voiced her support for eliminating all minimum requirements. Councilor Rossetti supported keeping the restrictions to the 1/2 mile of the TOD areas. Chairman Davis shared an inclination to agree with Councilor Hirsch, as we are in effect forcing parking onto homeowners, but noted a superseding desire to pass the updated zoning ordinance first, before exploring further policies.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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206481: 18 registered voters submitting a proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment to add a new Section 17.8 re: open space requirements for mid-rise and high-rise buildings.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207460: 18 registered voters submitting a proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment to add a new Section 17.8 re: open space requirements for mid-rise and high-rise buildings.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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205054: 22 registered voters proposing an amendment to Zoning Ordinance 6.4 to establish new open space requirements for certain buildings in the Assembly Sq Mixed Use District.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207332: Submitting proposed amendments the Zoning Ordinance to establish new open space requirements in the Assembly Sq Mixed Use District, Transit Oriented Districts, and Planned Unit Developments.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Handout:

- 20190430-Parking_reduced (with 206747)