



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

May 17, 2017
REPORT OF THE LAND USE COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Lance L. Davis	Chair	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Vice Chair	Present	
William A. White Jr.	Alderman At Large	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One Alderman	Present	
Maryann M. Heuston	Ward Two Alderman	Present	
Robert J. McWatters	Ward Three Alderman	Present	
Tony Lafuente	Ward Four Alderman	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven Alderman	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	Alderman at Large	Present	
John M. Connolly	Alderman At Large	Present	
Dennis M. Sullivan	Alderman At Large	Present	

Others present: Michael Glavin - OSPCD, George Proakis - OSPCD, Dan Bartman - OSPCD, Charles Sillari - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:15 PM by Alderman Davis and adjourned at 9:08 PM.

This meeting was recorded and the materials and video are available online at www.somervillema.gov/unionsquare

Approval of the May 2, 2017 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Approval of the May 9, 2017 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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202853: Requesting an updated amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to create new CCD-55 and CCD-45 Commercial subdistricts, a new Coordinated Development Special Permit, a new Union Square Overlay District, and related changes to Article 5 and the Zoning Map.

Alderman Ballantyne asked for dates on all of the documents submitted to the BOA from the Planning Department.

Alderman McWatters asked if phasing can be written into the zoning and Mr. Proakis said it doesn't make sense, from a planning perspective, because the project hasn't been submitted to the Planning Board yet and phasing is part of the Planning Department's review process. Alderman McWatters expressed concern regarding the building of residential units first and Alderman Rossetti reviewed certain points of the agreement that allows for residential to be built before office and lab spaces and she expressed her concern about D7 being built before D2. She wants to put language in the zoning to ensure that commercial is built first. Mr. Proakis explained that having that type of language in the zoning could impact the financing of the project.

Mr. Proakis said the commercial and residential on D2 will be coming out of the ground at the same time and he explained the need to build the affordable (housing) building first in order to be allowed to build the market rate (housing) building. Alderman White said it is important to look at the Master Land Disposition Agreement (MLDA). He doesn't want to freeze out housing if the market crashes and there is no market for commercial space, adding that a balance should be achieved that will not hurt folks looking for housing.

Alderman Heuston asked why the affordable housing wouldn't fit on D2 residential and if the residential build out on D2 would look different with less units. She feels the phasing language in the MLDA should be tighter about phasing. She also asked about land remaining public in D1 and D2. Mr. Proakis said civic space must be on its own lot and he doesn't think mandating ownership belongs in zoning. Nor does he see a need to demand it. Most developers would want it to go back to the city so they don't pay taxes on it. Alderman White is concerned about the loss in tax dollars with the city taking land back. Alderman Rossetti inquired about the phasing of the neighborhood park and pointed out that the language is not clear and doesn't dictate when the park must be complete.

Mr. Glavin explained how the master developer and the SRA will be working around the GLX.

Alderman Lafuente said a developer was chosen and asked if it is a good idea to make so many rules that it could jeopardize the entire development, should there be a downturn in the market. He said the city needs to let the developer make money, because then the city makes money.

Alderman McLaughlin said that he agrees with phasing on affordable housing and he wants to see land that is slated for commercial, not turned into housing. Mr. Glavin said there is phasing in the zoning and that there are important goals with respect to building residential. The profit from residential must stand on its own and the developer needs a strong market for residential and commercial. Chairman Davis asked about numbers of residential units on the various blocks.

Alderman Ballantyne would like to see open space go to 30% and Mr. Proakis said more open space means less commercial development. If additional open space is taken from residential development, it will break the balance of development. Mr. Proakis noted that the current open space planned is very aggressive for an urban center. Alderman Heuston asked about the amount of park space required and the overall square footage of the open space. The committee discussed where proposed park space will be located. Alderman Connolly asked if going to 30% would "open" the covenant because it goes outside the guidelines. He also pointed out it would make more sense to do something within the 25%. He doesn't want to blow up the agreement.

and move backwards. Alderman Niedergang would like to see 30% but it is not a deal breaker for him. He doesn't want to hold things up to get the 30%. He is concerned about the location of the proposed park because it is in the middle of a lot of traffic. Mr. Proakis said he is more inclined to work on traffic calming rather than locating the park somewhere else.

Alderman Heuston said she wants open space to be for the community, not visitors, and wants it in a spot where residents, not just commuters, would use it. She said that community garden space is an important part of the city's communities and she would like to see it added to the list of open space. Alderman Heuston stated her desire to have mitigation put into the design to deal with traffic and pollution. Chairman Davis said the location in D4 is in an area with little green and open space. Alderman Rossetti asked why the dog park minimum size is 10,000 square feet, while other parks require 8,000 square feet and Mr. Proakis said the minimum sizes allow them to be successful park. Mr. Bartman said the numbers were derived by looking at uses of other parks in the city, adding that dog park designers suggest 10,000 square feet so that dogs can run.

Alderman Davis asked about the amount of vegetation required in the parks and Mr. Bartman said mandates regarding vegetation would not allow for diversity in parks, noting that neighborhood parks, playgrounds, etc. require different amounts of vegetation. Alderman McLaughlin said flooding needs to be considered and he would like to increase the amount of vegetation.

The committee was told that a commercial parking garage doesn't count towards the commercial use percentage and Alderman White asked where he could find what uses count towards the 60% commercial requirement. Alderman Niedergang asked if urban agriculture in a park would count towards the 60% commercial requirement. Chairman Davis said he is inclined to look at the ideas of the developer and decide how it fits into the 60% requirement. Alderman Niedergang wants to change the commercial requirement from 60% to 66.66%. Chairman Davis wants to make sure that the taxes generated for various uses is considered, noting that a lab would generate more taxes than an urban farm.

Mr. Proakis said he wants to put together a task force and get a consultant to look at the right mix of commercial and residential.

The committee discussed the Dover Amendment.

Alderman Ballantyne wants to separate the lodging from the office use. She said a hotel won't drive traffic to other businesses during the workday. Chairman Davis respectfully disagreed and would like to see some data on the topic.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Handouts:

- Clarifications (with 202853)
- Development Phasing (with 202853)