



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Land Use Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 3, 2025

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair McLaughlin at 6:01pm and adjourned at 7:12pm on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Davis, Wilson, Ewen-Campen, McLaughlin), 0 opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor Sait).

Councilor Davis joined the meeting at 6:06pm.

Others present: Daniel Bartman - Deputy Director of Planning and Zoning, Samantha Carr - City Council Land Use Analyst, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager.

Roll Call

Present: Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen and City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson
Absent: Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait and Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-0565](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Land Use Committee Meeting of March 20, 2025.

RESULT: ACCEPTED
AYE: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and City Councilor At Large Wilson
ABSENT: Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Ward Six City Councilor Davis

2. Order (ID # [25-0085](#)) By Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Davis and Councilor Wilson That the Director of Planning, Preservation and Zoning draft an amendment to the Zoning Ordinances for transit oriented height and density bonuses for additional affordable housing and other enumerated community benefits.

Analyst Carr presented on her referenced slides, *Land Use - 2025-04-03 TOD Upzoning (with 25-0085)*, and the work she has been doing with Chair McLaughlin to move forward transit-oriented upzoning. Analyst Carr ended the presentation with questions to the Councilors around what they would like to see out of zoning, what resonated the most with them, and what additional information could be helpful as the committee moves forward. Councilor Ewen-Campen opened the conversation by raising his big picture questions. He spoke about the process that occurs with a Neighborhood Plan to add the most value and he presented the question of stopping the plans that do take many years and be more casual with how zoning occurs.

Councilor Davis and Councilor Wilson also echoed Councilor Ewen-Campen's concern around the timeline of neighborhood plans but the need for community planning when looking at what should be required when planning. Later in the meeting Councilor McLaughlin shared frustrations around Neighborhood Plans, the length they take to create, the inefficiency of them, and lack when making zoning changes. He shared a story about asking other communities who utilize Neighborhood Plans before changing zoning and no other communities implement the tool. Additionally, Councilor Ewen-Campen spoke to the zoning of Urban Residence (UR) to Mid-Rise 3 or 4 and that UR development also contributes to the density of housing and the consideration of the types of housing being permitted. He ended his statement by asking how well the new Zoning Ordinances are working compared to expectations, by how many new units have been permitted since this has passed.

Councilor Davis then shared his thoughts about the nuance that comes with zoning and the ability to layer in density bonuses. He specifically referenced the upzoning possibilities around Mount Vernon and the ability to add significant density in housing and affordable commercial space and asked for additional information on the bedroom counts in upzoned areas.

Councilor Wilson shared his thoughts on affordable inclusionary zoning in future planning and thinking about how to document that. He also went on to speak positively about added density bonus and urge planning to include additional civic space. He posed the question to add districts to future zoning plans in anticipation of Type IV heavy timber construction that is now permitted in the Massachusetts Building Code. He ended his thoughts with a request for a zoning map with the changes since the overhaul, both approved and rejected to see what people were looking to do. In response, Councilor Davis shared concerns about developing civic spaces outside of transit areas and expressing his thoughts that the planning documents should be inclusive of the public process.

Lastly, Councilor McLaughlin re-emphasized his desire for upzoning by transit areas, Ball Square specifically, and asked if a comprehensive plan is needed for an opportunity to add density in an accessible space. Councilors continued discussion around planning occurring near Ball Square as it abuts Medford. Director Bartman shared collaboration was done with Medford for the split parcels that exist on both sides of the parcel area and further information is available that looks at potential upzoning to six stories. Director Bartman shared the possibility of discussing what the upzoning process would look like for middle ground parcels and the possibility of collaborating with Analyst Carr about what can be accomplished this year.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3. Order
(ID # [25-0246](#))
- By Councilor Wilson and Councilor Mbah
That the Director of Inspectional Services and the Director of Planning, Preservation and Zoning discuss with this Council, Type IV heavy timber construction now permitted in the 10th edition of Massachusetts State Building Code 780 and potential impacts on inspections, development, and the Zoning Ordinance.
- RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**
4. Public
Communication
(ID # [24-1584](#))
- Horace-Ward LLC, Bealm Realty, LLC, Delhi Properties, LLC, and Delhi Properties II, LLC requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 11 Horace Street, 5-7, 9, 13, and 15 Ward Street, and 15 and 21 South Street from Mid-Rise 4 (MR4) to Mid-Rise 6 (MR6).
- Director Bartman shared the Planning Board voted to approve the zoning map amendment. Councilor Ewen-Campen and Councilor Wilson requested the vote be moved to a later date until after the Union Square Neighborhood council has more time to discuss concerns from residents and the committee has the opportunity to hear from the Ward 2 Councilor.
- RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Referenced Documents:

- Land Use - 2025-04-03 TOD Upzoning (with 25-0085)