



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

March 19, 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	

Others present: Councilor Niedergang, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Senior Planner Dan Bartman - OSPCD, Rositha Durham - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Council Chamber and was called to order at 6:10 PM by Chair Davis and adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Chair Davis outlined the procedure for tonight's meeting. The materials reviewed at tonight's meeting are available at www.somervillezoning.com.

Mr. Bartman updated the upcoming schedule on the slides. The next meeting will be Tuesday, April 2nd to discuss NR, UR, and Nonconforming Structures.

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.:

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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.:

Items 206481, 207460, 205054 and 207332 are related to the same topic and were discussed together.

See discussion under item # 207332.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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.:

Items 206481, 207460, 205054 and 207332 are related to the same topic and were discussed together.

See discussion under item # 207332.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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.:

Items 206481, 207460, 205054 and 207332 are related to the same topic and were discussed together.

See discussion under item # 207332.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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.:

Items 206481, 207460, 205054 and 207332 are related to the same topic and were discussed together.

Mr. Bartman gave a presentation based on a slide deck and noted that it was already available to the public at www.SomervilleZoning.com <<http://www.SomervilleZoning.com>>. He addressed the need to find an additional 88.25 acres of publicly accessible open space in order to meet the SomerVision goal. Mr. Bartman talked about the continued priorities to balance between open space, commercial development, and affordable housing. There have been challenges for the planning department to plan new neighborhoods and Mr. Bartment stated that it would be difficult to set a percentage of required open space before specific neighborhood plans were completed. Mr. Bartman presented maps showing hypothetical commercial buildings, using what he stated were the likely minimum floor plate, fit with the Boynton Yards neighborhood to demonstrate the challenge of incorporating both significant commercial development as well as meaningful open space. Mr. Bartman discussed the exercise of trying to determine what percentage of the Transit Oriented Districts the City might require to be set aside as open space. He discussed numbers with a hypothetical number of 25%, as a starting point for discussion. Mr. Bartman then presented detailed examples the planning department has reviewed from Boston Seaport District and Cambridge Research Park and the percentage of open space that they were able to accomplish, most of which was less than 25%, with variations depending on how it was calculated.

Councilor Rossetti suggested that the Committee set the percentage in the proposed amendment at 27.5%. The Committee expressed concern that the period for written public testimony was still open and that there was a desire to receive that, as well as the Planning Board recommendation, prior to voting on specific amendments. There was additional discussion regarding the merits of setting a percentage as a “stretch” goal, as well as the importance of balancing the need for affordable housing.

Chair Davis noted that the period for written public testimony will not close until April 12. He then stated that he would allow members of the public to speak if they wish.

President Ballantyne sponsored residents Tori Antonio, Bill Shelton, and Bill Vallettato speak on the matter.. Bill Shelton received the draft late that afternoon and had been working with planning and city staff. He endorse remarks about housing goals and impacts of policies. Open space advocates think commercial is top priority. Housing is how the city loses money. Three years ago the city hired a fiscal impact consultant whose report was not widely shared. It claimed that residential development is a net loss to the city due to the need for additional services. He further talked about the difference between neighborhood residential and mixed use residential. He stated that neighborhood residential have one child per unit vs. Mixed Use residential have one child per every 12 units. He talked about if the city continues with this path, we could have increasingly childless communities.

Ms. Antonio spoke and she supports the proposal. She said that the city should act on it and not wait for an alternative approach. Transformative areas should produce the majority of needed open space acreage. She also supports in lieu fee. Ms. Antonio is an advocate for both green space and affordable housing.

Bill Valetta is resident of Brick Bottom has been an urban planner for 40 years. He stated the plan has to guide the city rather than the other way around. He stated that the planning board approved two buildings on Inner Belt Road with the open space being put on roof. The hotel next door has next to no space, and is using a lot for space for Uber and delivery trucks to keep the streets.

Mr. Bartman closed out his presentation stating that the existing ordinance has been amended so many times that the draft proposal has challenges and the version that would go in to the proposed overhaul is much more logical. Additionally, he offered to answer any questions from the committee and community.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

207461 - Submitting an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance for the Protection of Significant Trees, by amending Article 2-Definitions and Article 10-Landscaping.:

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Handouts:

- Revised 3.15.19 Niedergang Affordable Hsg Amendments to Zoning Overhaul (with 206747)
- Revised 3.15.19 Niedergang Amendments Not Related to Affordable Housing (with 206747)