



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

May 15, 2018
REPORT OF THE LAND USE COMMITTEE

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

Others present: Dan Bartman - OSPCD, Rositha Durham - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Aldermen's Chamber and was called to order at 6:16 PM by Chairman Davis and adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Aldermen McLaughlin and Ballantyne had other city obligations and were not present at tonight's meeting and Alderman Mbah is out of the country.

204953: Requesting the adoption of a New Zoning Ordinance (1/2018 update) to supersede the current Zoning Ordinance as originally adopted on March 23, 1990.

The Chair reviewed the recent process, noting that there was a joint public hearing with the Planning Board on April 3, 2018 on this item. At that Hearing, both the Planning Board and the Committee on Land Use stated that they would keep the record open for written comment until May 25, 2018. The Committee's next meeting will be May 23, 2018. The expectation of the Planning Department and the Committee is that Planning will process input from the public comments, as well as from the Committee members, and likely submit a revised draft of the proposed zoning overhaul in the late summer. Assuming that a revised draft is sent to the Committee on Land Use, a new Public Hearing will be scheduled and deliberation of the new draft will follow. The remainder of the meeting centered on a slide presentation by Mr. Bartman (available at www.somervillezoning.com <<http://www.somervillezoning.com>>) discussing the proposed NR district and, specifically, the unit count and building types that it would allow. Mr. Bartman used slides to review the initial proposal from the 2015 draft of the overhaul, the revised proposal in the January 2018 draft, and to introduce the beginnings of a third proposal,

based on current input from the community and the Committee. The slides included detailed maps showing how the current RA and RB zones reflect and contrast against the actual built environment. Mr. Bartman noted that the current RA zone does not allow three units to be built and that the current RB zone only allows three units if certain lot requirements are met. There are currently 758 lots, or 13.31% of the existing RB zone, on which a third unit could be built.

There was discussion regarding how changes to the proposed NR zone might impact the stock of family sized homes available in Somerville and how, if a third unit were permitted, doing so within allowed additions to the structure and/or otherwise within the existing building envelope might affect the size and bedroom count of units. There was discussion about the cost of 3-plus bedroom units in the city, as well as whether the NR zone should be split into two zones - one that allows three units and one that does not. Members expressed both support for and concern regarding this concept. There was also discussion regarding the degree to which the proposed zoning focuses density in certain areas of the city vs. others and whether that is appropriately conceived in the current proposal. The members requested that Mr. Bartman provide data regarding the percentage and relative age categories for owner-occupants in the city.

Mr. Bartman also presented data, including maps, showing the distribution of triple-decker buildings in the RA and RB zones and noted that this is a building type as opposed to a structure with three units and that this is an important distinction to remember. The Committee discussed the pros and cons of preserving existing neighborhoods vs. promoting a variety of building types and the difficulties of achieving that in a zoning code. Mr. Bartman presented some of the Planning Staff's ideas for how and when triple-deckers might be allowed in the NR zone and the difficulties of crafting a provision that would not be overly complicated. This discussion will be continued at the next meeting and the Committee would like the Director of ISD to attend that meeting. The Chair noted that the objective of these meetings is to give Mr. Bartman and the rest of the Planning Staff guidance on this issue and requested that the May 23rd meeting take that approach. If time permits, the conversation on the 23rd will also touch on the issue of parking requirements in the proposed zoning overhaul.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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205055: That, to assist in considering the proposed zoning overhaul, the Directors of Finance, SomerStat, SPCD and Planning provide this Board with current reports on 1) SomerVision progress, 2) Capital Improvement Plan, 3) Projected revenues from the proposed zoning, and 4) Debt.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Handout:

- NR District Discussion 5-15-18 (with 204953)