



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

November 29, 2017

REPORT OF THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Mark Niedergang	Chair	Present	
Tony Lafuente	Vice Chair	Absent	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven Alderman	Present	

Others present: Michael Glavin - OSPCD, Tom Galligani - OSPCD, Barbara Rubel - Tufts, Robert Chahad - Tufts, Tim Snyder - Mayor's Office, Annie Connor - Legislative Liaison, Charles Sillari - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Niedergang and adjourned at 8:14 PM.

Approval of the October 16, 2017 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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203222: That this Board's Committee on Housing and Community Development meet with representatives of Tufts University for an update on the conversion of wood frame office-houses into residential housing in Medford and Somerville.

Ms. Rubel told the committee that there are no updates for Somerville as the project has been happening in Medford. Mr. Chahad, a director of real estate at Tufts, distributed a map of where the project is taking place and also entered a letter dated June 19, 2017 into the record. He said there have only been 2 dorms built on campus since 1980 and that Tufts is trying to add 600 beds in the next 5 years. There are underutilized houses being used by Tufts as office space and faculty housing. The real estate is owned by Walnut Hill which is a 501(c)(3). He went on to discuss the Medford project saying that the permitting process and neighborhood meeting being done now. Landlords are concerns about Tufts taking away a piece of their market share. The housing will be apartments and not dorms, with only one student per bedroom and there will be no parking except for handicapped drop off. The plan is to have preliminary discussions with Somerville in late summer/early fall of 2018. Chairman Niedergang said that he would prefer not having community meetings during the summer months.

Alderman Ballantyne said that she is against the expansion into Somerville and that she does not evictions. She said that Tufts never communicated to her as the Ward Alderman and she wants

to know what the impact to the neighborhood will be, adding that it is bad urban design. Alderman Ballantyne explained that there is a university zone and Tufts isn't increasing the density within that zone. She is concerned about the city losing real estate taxes and allowing religious institutions that serve Tufts. It makes families leave their homes and is in direct conflict with SomerVision. Mr. Chahad stated that there will be no evictions and that people will be relocated. He told the committee that the affected area in Somerville doesn't go to Powder House Blvd. or Teele Avenue.

Members of the public were sponsored to speak by Alderman Ballantyne. Among the concerns expressed were:

- The impact on the neighborhood school,
- Opposition to a transient group moving into the neighborhoods,
- The current housing crisis in the city,
- The character of the neighborhood being negatively impacted,
- A preference for Tufts to add dorm beds to the current campus,
- The expansion plan is unsustainable,
- The plan will harm relationships between Tufts and the neighborhoods,

Ms. Rubel pointed out some misunderstandings of the neighborhoods. She said more students are living in Medford rather than Somerville because of price and that Tufts can't afford to build a new dorm on campus now. Mr. Chahad acknowledged a housing shortage at Tufts and said everyone is working hard to provide more housing for students.

The discussion of this item was amended as follows, at the Board of Aldermen's meeting on February 22, 2018.

Ms. Rubel told the committee that there are no updates for Somerville as the project has been happening in Medford. Mr. Chahad, a director of real estate at Tufts, distributed a map of where the project is taking place and also entered a letter dated June 19, 2017 into the record. He said there have only been 2 dorms built on campus since 1980 and that Tufts is trying to add 600 beds in the next 5 years. There are underutilized houses being used by Tufts as office space and faculty housing. The real estate is owned by Walnut Hill which is a 501(c)(3). He went on to discuss the Medford project saying that the permitting process and neighborhood meeting being done now. Landlords are concerns about Tufts taking away a piece of their market share. The housing will be apartments and not dorms, with only one student per bedroom and there will be no parking except for handicapped drop off. The plan is to have preliminary discussions with Somerville in late summer/early fall of 2018. Chairman Niedergang said that he would prefer not having community meetings during the summer months.

Alderman Ballantyne advocated against expansion into the neighborhood by a) evicting families, seniors and faculty from their housing, and b) converting stick framed wooden buildings from office use to undergraduate housing. Tuft University has never communicated to the Ward Alderman about their expansion plans. This village housing concept is in direct conflict with what the community said it needed. It is also another example neighborhoods/people not being

advised, as the information was discovered through the Tufts Daily. Tuft University's ad hoc housing plan was sprung upon the community and is counter to what everyone in the community has been working for and ignores our city's strategic plan goals as outlined in SomerVision. Alderman Ballantyne explained that there is a university zone and Tufts isn't increasing the density within that zone, but rather using a suburban sprawl design approach instead of remembering we are in an urban area. Tufts is supporting religious institutions that serve Tufts to take buildings off the tax role. It makes families leave their homes and is in direct conflict with SomerVision. Mr. Chahad stated that there will be no evictions and that people will be relocated. He told the committee that the affected area in Somerville doesn't go to Powder House Blvd. or Teele Avenue.

27 residents attended the meeting who were against the "Village concept." Members of the public were sponsored to speak by Alderman Ballantyne. Among the concerns expressed were:

- The impact on the neighborhood school,
- Opposition to a transient group moving into the neighborhoods,
- The current housing crisis in the city,
- The character of the neighborhood being negatively impacted,
- A preference for Tufts to add dorm beds to the current campus,
- The expansion plan is unsustainable,
- The plan will harm relationships between Tufts and the neighborhoods,

Ms. Rubel said more students are living in Medford rather than Somerville because of price and that Tufts can't afford to build a new dorm on campus now. Mr. Chahad acknowledged a housing shortage at Tufts and said everyone is working hard to provide more housing for students.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

203981: That the Director of SPCD develop a Memorial Bench Program for public parks, the Community Path and other public property, and report back to this Board by October 12, 2017.

Chairman Niedergang wants this request expedited. Ms. Connor said a streamlined process for memorial benches is being worked on and that the application process is being finalized. She discussed veterans and non veteran dedications as well as memorial tree requests. Individuals would have to pay for the bench, but it would be purchased by the city in order to maintain consistency. Alderman Ballantyne wants clarification as to whether or not non-veterans may have dedications and Ms. Connor said she will be getting an answer to that question. Resident Evelyn McNamara submitted a sample application from the Town of Danvers and told the committee that she would like to dedicate a bench to a friend who passed away and that she is willing to be a test case for the new program. She would like to discuss maintenance of the benches.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

204321: That the Administration create a Pedestrian Safety Committee. (2nd request)

Mr. Snyder said he spoke with Alderman Heuston about this issue and that he is working with Brad Rawson, from OSPCD, on this matter. He discussed the Vision Zero campaign and explained that the Pedestrian Committee would also include public transportation riders. Rosemary Brum Bingham discussed a group she belongs to that tries to make neighborhoods safer, as it relates to senior citizens, and noted that level and well lit sidewalks are important. Evelyn McNamara discussed an accident she had when she was hit by a bicycle rider. She wants people to wear vests that light up and have flashing lights. Alderman Ballantyne said she is concerned about senior safety and spoke about un-level sidewalks in Davis Square. Chairman Niedergang discussed more enforcement of bicycle laws and said that he would like to see this committee established within the next 6 months.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

202021: That the Commissioner of Public Works and the Director of SPCD report to this Board on the feasibility of demolishing the bus shelter at Broadway and Cedar Street and replacing it with a garden, small park or sitting area. (2nd request)

Chairman Niedergang said this is not a pressing item, but he wonders if there has been any progress. Mr. Glavin said there has been no progress, but he will come back with more specificity, adding that he would like Brad Rawson from OSPCD to be included in the conversation.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

203563: That the Director of SPCD provide bi-annual progress reports on Assembly Square, Gilman Square, Lowell Street, Winter Hill, and future planned neighborhoods as they are completed.

Alderman Ballantyne explained why she requested this information and said that she would like a raw template of a report so that a format may be agreed to and suggested that it be modeled after the SomerVision report, with large bullet points. Mr. Galligani handed out the Winter Hill Neighborhood Plan Implementation Tracker.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

204322: That the Director of Finance and the Director of SPCD report on the financial and planning progress in the planned neighborhoods referenced in #203563.

See discussion of item #203563.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

200700: That the Director of SPCD report to this Board on the plan and timeline for implementing the recommendations in the recent report of the Sustainable Neighborhoods

Working Group.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

203593: That the Director of SPCD provide a bi-annual progress report on the 100 Homes Initiative, specifically relating to the new affordable off-site housing units granted by the Planning Board to FRIT on May 18, 2017.

Mr. Glavin discussed funding for the program and said he is impressed by SCC's partnership with the 100 Homes Initiative.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

203749: That the Director of SPCD focus workforce development plans on vulnerable adults, determine if additional funds are needed, and provide this Board with a quarterly progress report.

Mr. Galligani and Mr. Glavin spoke about the consultant who will be working on the plan and said that outreach is being done now. Individuals with handicaps were discussed and what specific needs may be out there. Alderman Ballantyne explained that the term "vulnerable" in the Order means economically vulnerable while Chairman Niedergang thinks it means people who are vulnerable to displacement.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

201837: That the Director SPCD report to this Board on the process to notify the public of late changes to Zoning Board of Appeals agendas including the agenda posted on the city's website.

Mr. Snyder explained that people came to meetings only to discover that a meeting was continued to a later date. The Planning Department staff has worked out a notification system and has launched a pilot program to notify people of an opt in system so that interested parties can follow a particular project via a URL. Chairman Niedergang suggested that an announcement to that effect be made at the beginning of Planning Board meetings. He also spoke about updated agendas on the website.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

203564: That the Director of SPCD incorporate into the initial notice to abutters of development projects, that they may submit their e-mail address to the Planning Department for updates as the designs or plan change.

See discussion of item #201837.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

203698: That the Director of SPCD discuss options property owners have to split lots in residential neighborhoods.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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200517: That the Mayor or his designee report at this Board's January 14, 2016 meeting on the status of the Green Line Extension into Union Square and beyond.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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202802: That the Administration update this Board on the proposed development at the MBTA shaft site on Summer Street.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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203018: Planning Director responding to #202802 re: the MBTA 343-351 Summer Street shaft site.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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203951: That the Director of SPCD inform the Ward 2 Alderman of the impact of new designs for Inman Square traffic on Lincoln Park neighborhoods, including any changes to MBTA service, and post this information as an FAQ on the city's website.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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204306: That the Director of SPCD contact the MBTA to confirm changes to Bus Route #91, then report back to this Board why they were made and how they will be communicated to residents.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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204307: That the Director of SPCD report to the MBTA the variation of routes drivers use for the #91 and #86 buses, and inquire as to the permanent routes the drivers should be using.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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204308: That the Director of SPCD commission a transportation study of the Union Square area to determine the current state of traffic, then present the findings at a community meeting.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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204392: That the Director of SPCD consider allowing a representative and/or resident from Prospect Hill to be involved in the selection of a Landscape Architect for the renovation of Prospect Hill Park.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

204511: Tufts University submitting its Fall 2017 University Accountability report.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

204512: Harvard University submitting its Fall 2017 University Accountability report.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

Handouts:

- Tufts Info - (with 203222)
- Senior Pedestrian Safety - (with 204321)
- Bench Info - (with 203981)
- Winter Hill (with 203563, 204322)
- Oct - Nov Stats - (with 203749)