



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

May 19, 2020

REPORT OF THE LAND USE COMMITTEE MEETING IN JOINT SESSION WITH THE PLANNING BOARD

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Ben Ewen-Campen	Chair	Present	
Lance L. Davis	Vice Chair	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	

The meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Ewen-Campen at 6:06pm and adjourned at 8:02pm.

The Chair noted that the next Land Use Committee meeting on June 2 is intended to focus on the Affordable Housing Overlay District.

The Committee recessed at 6:11pm to allow the Planning Board to begin its meeting and reconvened at 6:16pm.

Others present: Dan Bartman - OSPCD; Rebecca Cooper - OSPCD; Planning Board - Michael Capuano, Chair; Amelia Aboff; Jahan Habib; Sam Dinning; Rob Buchanan

The Chair noted that the proposed map amendments were submitted by owners (with one exception, submitted by Councilor McLaughlin), as all city residents have the right to petition to do. Mr. Bartman presented the map amendments in order of location.

Approval of the April 14, 2020 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Approval of the April 23, 2020 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Public Hearing - item 208951

208951: 29 Washington Street Realty Trust proposing a zoning amendment to re-zone their property at 29 Washington St to MR4 or MR5.

Mr. Bartman noted that this is currently a car wash in Ward 1, zoned in the Mid-Rise (MR) 3 District, and the request by the property owner is to change this to either MR 4 or MR 5. Councilor Davis noted that the adjacent properties are zoned as MR 3. Councilor Niedergang wondered what the administration's position is and also added that the comments submitted state that Holiday Inn next door and the property across the street will be MR 4 and asked for more information about the neighborhood. Mr. Bartman noted that the future of Inner Belt is still undetermined, but will likely have an Overlay District that could allow for higher rise buildings. Much of this planning work is still to come. Washington Street currently is primarily MR 3. There is some consideration for shadows, as well as the shallow nature of lots in the area. Councilor McLaughlin elaborated that there are not many three story buildings on the street and noted that the information about the Holiday Inn was inaccurate and it will not be MR 4. Councilor Davis added that this property may benefit from an affordable housing density bonus, as a potential option. Councilor White asked for an opinion from the City Solicitor on whether approval of this would violate spot-zoning.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Public Hearing - item 209034

209034: Washington TN LLC proposing a zoning amendment to re-zone their property at 373 Washington St to UR.

Mr. Bartman shared that the proposal is for the two parcels at 373 and 377 Washington Street to be zoned in the Urban Residence (UR) district. Currently, 373 Washington Street is Neighborhood Residence (NR) and 377 Washington Street is Fabrication.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Public Hearing - item 209419

209419: Alessandro & Elaine T. Leccese Family Trust proposing a zoning amendment to re-zone their properties at 198 Washington Street to MR5.

Mr. Richard Nilsson mentioned that this was one of 26 properties changed by an amendment on November 20, shortly before the zoning ordinance was adopted. The commercial corridor zoning was previously in place for a decade. Previous maps placed this in an MR district, converted from a commercial corridor zone.

Mr. Bartman shared that this is a corner property in Ward 2 that is a house and yard in the NR district, proposing to change to the MR 5 district. The boundary area in the Union Square East Overlay District is still under review, and this property could possibly be included. Chair Ewen-Campen elaborated that creating an Overlay District that had a master planning aspect was a core goal, and it seems logical to keep the zoning in place until that planning process is completed (USQE).

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Public Hearing - item 209734

209734: 62 College Ave Trust LLC proposing a zoning amendment to re-zone their property at 60-62 College Ave to UR.

Mr. Meredith Porter pointed out that the property behind the building, on Chandler Street, has the same owner (who also owns many buildings in the city) who may be looking to consolidate the lots. The

building next door is also zoned in the UR District. He encouraged decisions to be made considering SomerVision and desired uses of the property in the future.

Mr. Bartman noted that this Ward 6 property is currently in the NR District with Small Business Overlay, requesting to be zoned in the UR District. As a 10 unit apartment building, it is currently a non-conforming building in the NR District. Councilor Davis confirmed that this was never proposed as a UR District, and Mr. Bartman elaborated that much of College Avenue was RB under the previous ordinance, which generally translated to the NR District. Councilor Davis added that this may have been an oversight, and re-zoning does not seem to pose a risk. Mr. Bartman noted that it may create issues with modifying the exterior of the building, as there are restrictions in being located next to an NR building.

Councilor Davis shared that the identity of the property owner cannot legally be considered, and the application must be addressed on the facts only.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked for clarification on merging two parcels that abut at rear property lines and Mr. Bartman noted that the act of merging two lots would create a through-lot, which is prohibited in the zoning ordinance outside of a civic space. However, he cautioned that anything could be possible with a variance.

Councilor Davis expressed support for this proposal, and Councilor Ewen-Campen agreed that this was not included within a community process and is effectively correcting an oversight.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	Ewen-Campen, Davis, White Jr., McLaughlin, Niedergang

Public Hearing - item 209735

209735: George and Maria Hatzis proposing a zoning amendment to re-zone their property at 248 Somerville Ave to MR5.

Mr. George Hatzis of Topsfield, owner of the property along with his wife Maria, shared that the request to change the zoning to MR 5 would maintain the allowances previously in place before the new zoning ordinance was adopted. Mr. Hatzis would like to put together a project to improve the appearance in that location and enhance the area. He felt the changes were made without the owners' notification or input. Mr. Nilsson, an architect, helped Mr. Hatzis put together a proposal that would conform with the former zoning. He discouraged the down-zoning in Union Square to NR and UR and noted that more mixed-use zoning is needed and that the process favors large developers.

Mr. Bartman presented the map of this property at the corner of Allen Street and Somerville Avenue, currently zoned as NR and requesting to be changed to MR 5. Councilor Niedergang noted that the Union Square East planning process seems critical to decision making on this. Mr. Bartman noted that there is little capacity for neighborhood planning and engagement currently, but Union Square East and Brickbottom are the two areas of priority. Councilor McLaughlin added that many main corridors could support additional stories, and more affordable housing, but the plan should be comprehensive, rather than attempting to fix one parcel at a time. Mr. Bartman, Councilors Davis and Ewen-Campen and Planning Board Chair Capuano all clarified that the proper legal notifications were sent prior to all public hearings and debate during the lengthy zoning amendment process. Chair Ewen-Campen agreed that the more comprehensive planning process should drive the changes, and encouraged that action.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Public Hearing - item 209777

209777: Nikhilesh Gorukanti proposing a zoning amendment to re-zone their property at 365-369 Somerville Ave to remove the Pedestrian Street designation.

This amendment has been withdrawn.

RESULT:	WITHDRAWN
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210169: Proposing an amendment to the Zoning Map, to rezone 31 Tufts Street to the Urban Residence District.

Mr. Bartman noted that this is currently a parking lot zoned as a Civic District and controlled by the City of Somerville. Many municipal and state-owned properties, as well as parks, are in the Civic District. The proposal is to re-zone this to the Urban Residence District (UR). Councilor McLaughlin added that the parking lot is next to a housing development and the UR district will allow for more public housing and green space.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	Ewen-Campen, Davis, White Jr., McLaughlin, Niedergang