



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Land Use Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 4, 2025

6:30 PM

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Cmc8Uk2FSTsgP7mmQhSPDQ

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair McLaughlin at 6:30pm and adjourned at 7:17pm on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Clingan, Sait, Wilson, and McLaughlin), 0 opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor Ewen-Campen).

Others present: Samantha Carr - Land Use Analyst, Dan Bartman - Director of Planning, Preservation, and Zoning, Yasmine Raddassi - Legislative Liaison, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager.

Roll Call

Present: Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson, Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait and Jesse Clingan

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-1150](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Land Use Committee Meeting of June 17, 2025.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Clingan

2. Public Communication (ID # [25-0976](#)) Bill Valetta submitting comments re: item #25-0085, an Order regarding zoning for bonuses for additional affordable housing and other enumerated community benefits.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

3. Public Communication (ID # [25-0975](#)) Sublime Systems submitting comments re: items #24-1460, #25-0128, #25-0129, and #25-0131, amendments to the Zoning Ordinance for laboratory, research and development, and arts uses.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

4. Order (ID # [25-0338](#)) By Councilor McLaughlin That the Director of Planning, Preservation and Zoning provide the Committee on Land Use with an opinion as to whether the City Council may dictate standards and materials used for outdoor bike facilities.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE5. 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.

Councilor Wilson clarified, upon Legislative Liaison Raddassi stating the administration would not be weighing in to avoid violating state law on materials, that this request is to ensure the city is built within this new Building Code and hear from the impacted departments that they are prepared to abide by it. Director Bartman shared the Type IV construction unlocks new potential for high-rise buildings, but is outside the typically work of Planning, Preservation, and Zoning, and would be willing to bring back information to the committee. Councilor Wilson expressed the desire for the Inspectional Services Department to attend or submit a memo to the committee about their thoughts and how they may be impacted.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE6. Public
Communication
(ID # [25-0200](#))

15 registered voters requesting a Zoning Text Amendment to amend the Zoning Ordinance sections 3.1.8c, 3.1.9c, 3.1.10c, 3.1.13k, 3.1.13l, 3.2.12l. and 3.2.12m.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE7. 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.

Land Use Analyst Samantha Carr presented on the attachment, *Land Use - 202509-04 Presentation TOD Upzoning Gilman Square (with 25-0085)*, running through a draft proposal for potential upzoning in Gilman Square.

Chair McLaughlin opened the discussion by reminding the public this is not a proposal and should a proposal come forward, there will be full engagement from the community. The Chair also clarified the city is working on upzoning relative to Broadway Corridor and the decision to utilize Samantha in her role was to address other areas in the community that could benefit from upzoning.

Councilor Wilson began the larger discussion by sharing his personal preference for height (mid-rise MR6) around transit areas and then Urban Residential (UR) surrounding those areas to create additional housing. Councilor Ewen-Campen also shared his hopes for the Gilman Square

upzoning which includes not only more housing but also more shopping, community resources, and a vibrant mixed-use square. Despite past attempts, it has never led to breaking ground on a proposal outside of zoning issues. He also highlighted the desire for any future proposals to include School Street. Councilor Wilson and Councilor Ewen-Campen requested more information around the tax implications that come with increased zoning and would request the Assessor's Office be brought into the discussion. Following discussion from the committee Director Bartman shared his desire on considering upzoning neighborhood parcels that are not on the main streets and how to entertain and accomplish those goals. He echoed Councilor Ewen-Campen concerns around economic constraints that are at play in hand, and the need for proposals to consider the economic climate to get developers to build in Gilman Square. Councilor Sait asked what specific downsides, aside from tax increments, there are from upzoning. Director Bartman shared some considerations around shadow casting and depending on the height of buildings how wind affects the pedestrian experience, as well as the reflectivity of the exterior buildings next to the train station as it cannot reflect in the eyes of the train drivers.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Referenced Documents:

- Land Use - 2025-09-04 Presentation TOD Upzoning Gilman Square (with 25-0085)