



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Land Use Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, November 6, 2025

6:30 PM

Joint Meeting with the Planning Board and the Somerville Redevelopment Authority

This meeting was held virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:36 pm by Chair McLaughlin and adjourned at 8:02 pm with a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Davis, Wilson, Ewen-Campen and McLaughlin), none opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor Sait).

Others present: Ben Demers - Urban Revitalization Senior Planner, Samantha Carr - Land Use Liaison, Yasmin Raddassi – Legislative Liaison, Daniel Bartman - Director of Planning and Zoning, Delaney Fisher-Cassiol - Clerk of Committees

The committee went into recess at 6:36pm and returned at 6:40pm

The committee went into recess at 7:15pm and returned at 7:16pm

Roll Call

Present: Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson and Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis

Absent: Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-1544](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Land Use Committee Meeting of October 2, 2025.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and Ward Six City Councilor Davis

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Wilson and Ward Five City Councilor Sait

2. Public Hearings

- 2.1. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1554](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Sections 10.10.3, 15.1.2, 15.1.6, 15.1.8, 15.2.1, 15.2.2, 15.2.3, 15.2.4, 15.3.1, 15.3.2, and 15.5.2 of the Zoning Ordinance to make pre-submittal meetings optional for most permits and to improve clarity and consistency.

Director of Planning and Zoning Daniel Bartman reviewed *Land Use - 2025-11-06 Pre-Submittal Meetings Presentation (with 25-1554)*. He noted that in 2024, 42% of pre-submittal meetings involved participants already

familiar with the zoning ordinance. That number increased to 64% in 2025.

Chair McLaughlin opened the public hearing at 7:06pm.

Attorney Adam Dash stated that pre-submittal meetings often add unnecessary time and cost to projects, particularly when the requirements are already clear. He expressed support for eliminating the requirement.

Chair McLaughlin closed the public hearing at 7:08pm.

Please submit any additional comments to publiccomments@somervillema.gov by 11/21.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

2.2. Mayor's Request
(ID # [25-1552](#))

Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Tables 4.1.13, 4.2.13, 4.3.13, 4.4.13, 5.1.14, 7.2.7, 7.4.8, 8.4.16 (c), and 9.1.1 of the Zoning Ordinance to permit Home-Based Child Day Care accessory uses and make corrections.

Director of Planning and Zoning Daniel Bartman reviewed *Land Use - 2025-11-06 Home-Based Child Day Care Presentation (with 25-1552)*. He explained that family child care homes have been added as a required use under state law. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts recently amended M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 3, which outlines the uses that municipalities must permit. The amendment adds both family child care homes and large family child care homes to the list of uses that must be allowed in Somerville.

Chair McLaughlin opened the public hearing at 7:09pm.

Nobody from the public spoke on the item.

Chair McLaughlin closed the public hearing at 7:09pm.

Please submit any additional comments to publiccomments@somervillema.gov by 11/21.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

2.3. Public
Communication
(ID # [25-1539](#))

12 registered voters requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 363 Highland Avenue from Mid-Rise 4 (MR4) to Mid-Rise 5 (MR5) and from MR4 to Mid-Rise 6 (MR6), and 110 Willow Avenue MR4 to MR6.

Councilor Davis recused himself from discussion of this item due to his home being across the street from the property being discussed.

Attorney Adam Dash, representing Altitude Properties, LLC, spoke about changing the zoning for two properties and Peter Quinn from Peter Quinn Architects, Davis Square, reviewed the attachment *Zoning Amendment - 363 Highland Avenue & 110 Willow Avenue*. He explained that the proposal aims to maximize MR6 zoning and highlighted the potential benefit of

additional affordable housing, noting that the project could add over 200 units, including 50 affordable units. Attorney Dash added that allowing MR5 or MR6 zoning provides an incentive for development. He emphasized that the Planning Board and City Council would still need to approve any projects.

Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that the proposed amendment includes another property that is not part of the current proposal. Architect Quinn clarified that the other site faces Whipple Street. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked whether the site remaining vacant across the street would impact the project, and Architect Quinn responded that it would not because it is across the street.

Councilor Wilson commented that the addition of 50 new affordable units is positive and asked whether they had discussed the possibility of increasing that number with the city. Attorney Dash confirmed that it had been discussed and that the number is open for further consideration. Councilor Wilson urged the city to consider adding more affordable units.

Chair McLaughlin opened the public hearing at 7:27pm.

Peter Kim-Santos, Davis Square Neighborhood Council Treasurer, stated that a common topic among the DSNC is the need for more housing, so this proposal for transit-accessible housing is welcome, particularly with its 40 to 50 inclusionary units. He added that the property owner and architect have engaged in good-faith dialogue about how the buildings could interface with the community path, and the council looks forward to continuing that conversation and working with the team on the building design.

Scott Nowakowski spoke in support of the project, noting that increased density is especially needed near Davis Square.

Chair McLaughlin closed the public hearing at 7:30pm

Please submit any additional comments to publiccomments@somervillema.gov by 11/21.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

2.4. Mayor's Request
(ID # [25-1239](#))

Requesting that this City Council schedule a joint public hearing with the Somerville Redevelopment Authority regarding updating the 90 Washington Street Demonstration Project Plan.

This item was discussed with item 25-1607.

Ben Demers - Urban Revitalization Senior Planner reviewed *Land Use - 2025-11-06 90 Washington SRA Presentation S (with 25-1594, 25-1595, 25-1596, 25-1607)*. Planner Demers explained that the proposed changes to the 90 Washington project are intended to give the public another opportunity to weigh in. The City Council and the Somerville Redevelopment Authority (SRA) originally adopted the plan in 2019. The

next major step will be selecting a development partner for the site, located east of the East Somerville MBTA station.

The SRA acquired the property in 2019 for a new public safety building. The proposed amendments would remove the requirement to construct a public safety complex and instead focus on recouping funds from the site's development. For Phases 4 and 5, Planner Demers recommended including the 90 Washington Civic Advisory Committee in the process, and in Phase 5, having the selected developer apply for necessary permits within three years from the date of transfer, rather than breaking ground within that period, to allow for greater flexibility.

Chair McLaughlin opened the public hearing at 6:56pm. Nobody from the public spoke on the item. Chair McLaughlin closed the public hearing at 6:57pm. Please submit any additional comments to publiccomments@somervillema.gov by 11/21.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked for the timeline of when this needs to be approved and the request for proposals process wrapped up. Planner Demers said they are looking to release a request for proposals early next year, but it also depends on the city's financial health. Councilor Wilson expressed that he wants to make use of the space around Cobble Hill.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

3. 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.

Samantha Carr, Land Use Liaison, reviewed *Land Use - 2025-11-06 LUC Gilman Square Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Upzoning Updates (with 25-0085)*. She noted that the focus is on converting neighborhood residential parcels to Urban Residential (UR) in response to City Council feedback, while also protecting and expanding small business areas in line with the strategic goals of Somervision.

Councilor Wilson expressed interest in Urban Residential (UR) zoning, as it allows for greater flexibility, particularly off Medford and Pearl Streets. Councilor Ewen-Campen referenced the mayor's office memo (*Land Use - 2025-11-06 Memo, with 25-0085*) and emphasized the importance of public comment on zoning changes to avoid potential displacement from upzoning. Yasmine Raddissi, Legislative Liaison, noted concerns about displacement and stressed that comprehensive engagement is needed to minimize impacts and ensure all residents are aware of proposed changes. Councilor Davis agreed, adding that development is needed but should be intentional,

prioritizing smaller units to keep rents low and support small businesses. Chair McLaughlin noted that the committee is in a preliminary stage, and further communication and coordination with the Office of Housing Stability will occur once a formal plan is developed. Councilor Davis highlighted that upzoning is intended to increase development pressure and that diverse unit sizes are beneficial. Councilor Wilson supported upzoning near transit, citing inclusionary zoning and density as ways to limit displacement and preserve affordable housing.

Samantha Carr concluded by reviewing the fiscal impacts in the attachment. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked about the effect on taxes for future residents. Liaison Raddissi stated that the Assessor's Office is working on a tax reassessment, expected by the November 25th Council meeting, and she is coordinating to have the office present.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

4. Public
Communication
(ID # [24-0328](#))

Ten individuals, including five residents, submitting comments re: item 24-0059, a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 321 Washington Street from Fabrication (FAB) to Commercial Industry (CI).

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Mayor's Request
(ID # [25-1594](#))

Requesting approval of the amended 90 Washington Street Demonstration Project Plan.

This item was taken up with item 25-1607.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

6. Mayor's Request
(ID # [25-1595](#))

Requesting approval of an amendment to the Memorandum of Agreement between the City Council and Redevelopment Authority regarding the redevelopment of 90 Washington Street.

This item was taken up with item 25-1607.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

7. Mayor's Request
(ID # [25-1596](#))

Requesting approval of the development objectives for the redevelopment of 90 Washington Street.

This item was taken up with item 25-1607.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

8. Officer's
Communication
(ID # [25-1607](#))

Executive Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development conveying a summary of the 90 Washington process review and development objectives.

This item was discussed with item 25-1239.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Referenced Documents:

- Land Use - 2025-11-06 Pre-Submittal Meetings Presentation (with 25-1554)
- Land Use - 2025-11-06 Home-Based Child Day Care Presentation (with 25-1552)
- Land Use - 2025-11-06 Gilman Square Scenarios 1-4 Maps (with 25-0085)
- Land Use - 2025-11-06 LUC Gilman Square TOD Upzoning Updates (with 25-0085)
- Land Use - 2025-11-06 90 Washington SRA Presentation S (with 25-1594, 25-1595, 25-1596, 25-1607)
- Land Use - 2025-11-06 Memo (with 25-0085)