



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

February 1, 2022  
REPORT OF THE LAND USE COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Ben Ewen-Campen	Chair	Present	
Lance L. Davis	Vice Chair	Present	
Beatriz GomezMouakad	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Present	
Kristen Strezo	City Councilor at Large	Present	

Others present: Dan Bartman-OSPCD, George Proakis-OSPCD, Greg Karczewski, president of US2 and Tori Antonino from the Union Square Neighborhood Council

The meeting was held virtually and was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chairperson Ewen-Campen and adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

**Approval of the November 30, 2021 Minutes**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>ACCEPTED</b>
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**Approval of the December 6, 2021 Minutes**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>ACCEPTED</b>
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**212959: That the Land Use Committee review the process of amending zoning ordinances, for the benefit of new Councilors and the public.**

Chair Ewen-Campen shared a document that he wrote for purposes of the new committee members and others who may be interested in the process of amending the Zoning Ordinance. See attached document.

He noted anything about zoning can be found at [Somervillezoning.com](http://Somervillezoning.com). Councilor Davis stated challenges have been to provide full access to the documents and incorporating several of the amendments made in the past. Mr. Bartman stated he was able to update the PDF with all the documents as of 12/31/21. The chair stated that if there is something the councilors would like to do, they would reach out to the planning staff. Additionally, property owners can submit a

request to change the zoning of their property. He stated this is a time-consuming process, that includes scheduling challenges and advertisement postings that need to be coordinated.

Councilor Gomez Mouakad asked how to address reasons for amendments. Mr. Bartman responded that Massachusetts is not considered a planned state re: zoning, there's no requirement in state law. Typically, zoning is done after planning.

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**212826: That the Administration present specific plans to this Council to advance the long-awaited affordable housing components of the Union Square redevelopment on the "D2.4" and "D4.3" parcels.**

There were representatives from Union Square Development and Union Square Neighborhood Council. This meeting was not put in place to decide tonight, but to take any questions from the attendees.

The chair's intention tonight is to discuss two specific pieces of land within USQ plan. His concern is that these properties have been stuck in a quagmire.

The chair showed the D parcels in Union Square which include Green Line Station and Lab Building. His hope had been there would be an affordable housing project. Mr. Proakis stated he did not have much to add and there are challenges with questions to address. He looks forward to continue to discuss this matter. Councilor Strezo asked for more detail on the plot of land and it seems quite narrow. She wanted to know how many units could be created for affordable housing.

Chair talked about D4.3 which is Webster Ave coming out of Union Square. He provided a brief overview stating over several years US2 negotiated with Union Square Neighborhood Council and they agreed to advocate for this parcel to become a majority affordable housing with 51 units with 75% as affordable housing. He believes the current zoning for Union Square set a limit that no building could have more than 50% affordable housing units.

Mr. Proakis shared a slide of Strategies for addressing the "50% affordable" cap on D-block lots. He stated the 1<sup>st</sup> option is to apply for a hardship variance when you want to break one of rules of the code. This could take a couple of months for this request.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> option is to permit the affordable building using the underlying district. This could take approximately 4-6 months.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> options involve resetting the permits rights under the code. These two options would take approximately 6-8 months. Option 4 is really complex and provides the cleanest, complete solution to provide the solution to affordable housing.

Mr. Proakis stated that Option 5 is not really appealing.

Councilor McLaughlin asked about the US zoning contractual obligations that would limit or prohibit the city from fixing this problem. He would like US2 thoughts on making changes to the covenant.

There was an email received from US2 earlier today. Please see attached.

The chair allowed some members from US2 to speak. Greg Karczewski, president of US2 suggested that the language in the memo was a way to allow affordable housing project in the current zoning to remain intact. He stated there is a willingness on their part to look at the provisions to allow affordable housing. Councilor McLaughlin asked if Option 4 would require any changes to the covenant.

The Chair shared the language that US2 legal team proposed amendment of up to 80% to go forward. Mr. Proakis stated he looks forward to working with US2 and will review the pieces with the city's legal department.

Ms. Tori Antonino from the Union Square Neighborhood Council stated she would like to see Option 3 happen with underground parking.

Mr. Proakis responded to Councilor Gomez Mouakad's question stating the inclusionary housing changed in 2016 across the Master Plan as a whole with 20% district. The Master Plan does not allow anyone to build above ground parking.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**212871: Requesting approval of amendments to Sections 3.1.14.a and 3.2.13.a Contextual Front Setbacks of the Neighborhood Residence and Urban Residence zoning districts of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.**

The Chair stated items 212871, 212916 and 213008 are proposed amendments to the city. There will be a public hearing two weeks from Thursday and the meeting will change to Thursdays going forward.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**212913: Kechia Davis requesting the adoption of an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance Map to re-zone 1060 Broadway Unit C-001 from Powderhouse School (PS) to Commercial Industry (CI).**

The chair stated the applicant will withdraw and submit again in the future.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WITHDRAWN</b>
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**212916: Broadway Somerville Apartments, LLC requesting the adoption of an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance Map to change the zoning district of 383 Broadway from UR to MR5.**

The Chair stated items 212871, 212916 and 213008 are proposed amendments to the city. There will be a public hearing two weeks from Thursday and the meeting will change to Thursdays going forward.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**213008: Michael E. Olson requesting the adoption of an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance Map to change the zoning district of 125 Lowell Street from NR to UR.**

The Chair stated items 212871, 212916 and 213008 are proposed amendments to the city. There will be a public hearing two weeks from Thursday and the meeting will change to Thursdays going forward.

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**Reference Material:**

- Land Use - Introduction to Amending the Zoning Ordinance
- DLA Piper Memorandum Re D4.3 Zoning Amendment(US2 Union Square) (with 212826)
- LUC Options US2 for meeting (with 212826)