



# City of Somerville, Massachusetts

## City Council Land Use Committee

### Meeting Minutes

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**Thursday, November 21, 2024**

**6:30 PM**

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This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair McLaughlin at 6:30pm and adjourned at 7:57pm with a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Wilson, Pineda Neufeld, Ewen-Campen, Davis, McLaughlin), none opposed, and none absent.

Others present: Dan Bartman – Deputy Director of Planning, Preservation, and Zoning, Brad Rawson – Director of Mobility Division at OSPCD, Justin Schreiber – Senior Transportation Planner and Project Manager, Sarah White – Preservation Planner, Natasha Frazier – Assistant Clerk of Committees.

#### Roll Call

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

1. Committee Minutes  
(ID # [24-1538](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Land Use Committee Meeting of October 17, 2024.

**RESULT:** **ACCEPTED**

**AYE:** Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Wilson

2. Public Communication  
(ID # [24-1080](#))

Walter Tauro requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 282 McGrath Highway from Neighborhood Residence (NR) to Small Business (SB) Overlay District.

The Planning Board issued a recommendation after this proposal was raised in a recent public hearing. Director Bartman shared considerations regarding overlay districts. Chair McLaughlin stated that there was general community support for this request during the public hearing, and it was also noted that the Ward Councilor supported this request during the public hearing.

**RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

**AYE:** Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Wilson

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3. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1196](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Sections 2.2.1, 3.1.16, 3.2.15, 4.1.13, 4.2.13, 4.3.13, 4.4.14, 5.1.15, 6.1.11, 6.2.13, 6.3.11, 6.4.14, 9.2.6.h, 9.2.14.b.v, and Table 9.1.1 of the Zoning Ordinance to streamline the regulation of daycare services and permit additional daycare operation in the Residential, Mid-Rise, and Commercial zoning districts.
- Director Bartman stated that this is an effort to ensure that daycares are permitted across the city, specifically on pedestrian streets, and to aligns the definitions in the Ordinance with State law. Councilor Davis expressed concerns regarding the intended purpose of pedestrian streets. Several Councilors expressed an appreciation for this consideration and there was discussion among Councilors regarding the importance of these amendments to supporting families with children.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Wilson
4. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1259](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Articles 2-7, Articles 9-11, Article 13, and Article 15 of the Zoning Ordinance to make corrections, clarifications, and regulatory framework improvements.
- Director Bartman stated that this request aims to correct written errors due to a history of amending the Ordinance multiple times. He stated that this would ensure everything in the Ordinance is correctly referenced. He also stated that one of the most substantive changes is clarifying that the Ordinance applies to commercial signs only, noting that non-commercial signs fall under free speech.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Wilson
5. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1197](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Sections 1.1.4, 2.1.1, 3.1.18, 3.2.17, 4.1.15, 4.2.15, 4.3.15, 4.4.16, 5.1.17, 6.1.13, 6.2.15, 6.3.13, 6.4.16, 7.2.9, 7.3.9, 8.2.4.c, 9.2.3, 9.2.6, 11.2.4, 11.2.5, 11.2.6, 11.3, 12.1.7, 15.2.1, and Table 9.1.1 of the Zoning Ordinance to address various parking requirements.
- Councilors and City staff discussed the implications of off-street minimum parking requirements for new developments. Discussion for this item focused on how the proposed change and potential alternatives would impact members of the community with accessibility needs. As noted towards the end of the discussion, the proposed series of amendments would remove remaining minimum parking requirements for development in Somerville.
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Councilor Ewen-Campen expressed concerns with mandated parking minimums. He stated that status quo logic suggests that requiring new developments to build off-street parking resolves congestion issues. However, this is contrary to the facts and data that indicate mandated parking minimums make congestion worse. He stated there is a consensus about the negative impacts of mandated parking minimums among urban planners who deal with congestion issues. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked Director Rawson if parking is still being built now that parking minimums have been removed for 70% of the city. Director Rawson stated that parking is still being built and that the available data so far suggests that the market is producing parking-heavy, parking-light, and zero-parking projects throughout Somerville. Planner Schreiber shared a list of all addresses that are not eligible to participate in the Permit Parking Program and there were questions among Councilors regarding specific projects.

Councilor Ewen-Campen discussed the concerns raised by the Commission for Persons with Disability who emphasized the need that certain people with disabilities have for vehicle parking. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked how the City ensures accessible handicap parking for residents in buildings that are zero-parking projects. Director Rawson stated that City staff work with the Traffic Commission to make recommendations for specialty and priority on-street parking. He also noted that accessible parking is not limited to ADA placard spaces. He stated that staff is working to operationalize recommendations for accessible parking as part of Transportation Access Plans. Councilor Ewen-Campen raised concerns about the message that zero-parking residential buildings send to people who require a vehicle in their daily life. He asked how zero-parking buildings will remain accessible to people who require a vehicle.

Planner Schreiber stated that the City seeks to address these concerns in the Transportation Access Plan that developers provide to the City, which includes diagrams for access broadly speaking. The Mobility Division is proposing to place a greater emphasis on accessible parking needs within the Transportation Access Plans. He noted that these plans are shared with the Planning Board. He stated that in the case of zero-parking projects, developers may include accessible on-street parking or loading zones as an alternative to off-street parking. Planner Schreiber described how the Mobility Division, Traffic Commission, and Planning Board can address these issues for each project. Councilor Ewen-Campen stated that he supports the approach that Planner Schreiber described rather than a minimum legal requirement for each building.

Councilor Wilson stated that he is generally supportive of removing parking minimum requirements and that he also shares accessibility concerns raised by the Commission for Persons with Disability and advocates. Councilor Wilson raised the idea of adjusting zoning to include ADA parking

minimums and referred to the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. Councilor Pineda Neufeld stated that she has spoken with constituents who have mobility issues but do not have an ADA placard, and emphasized the importance of Somerville being a community where residents can age in place. There was further discussion among Councilors regarding Councilor Wilson's consideration regarding ADA parking minimums, whether parking thresholds could be determined according to building capacity, and whether there are case studies to compare to. Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that a number of cities have gotten rid of parking minimums, such as Cambridge, and he does not believe Cambridge is becoming more difficult to age in place.

Director Bartman stated that the opinion of the Solicitor's office is that there is not a direct conflict between repealing a minimum parking requirement and federal law. He stated that the impact of the proposed amendments would be to remove minimum parking requirements in all districts. He explained the length of the amendment and also described the history of parking requirements in cities, noting that they did not solve the problem of congestion as they were intended to.

**RESULT:** **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

6. Public  
Communication  
(ID # [23-0940](#))

NRL WSC 200 Inner Belt Prop, LLC requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 200 Inner Belt Road from Commercial Industry (CI) to High-Rise (HR).

**RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE**

**AYE:** Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Wilson

**RECUSED:** Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

7. Public  
Communication  
(ID # [23-1617](#))

Charles Zammuto requesting the adoption of an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance Map to change the zoning district of 563-565 Broadway from Urban Residence (UR) to Mid-Rise 4 (MR4).

**RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE**

**AYE:** Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Wilson

8. Mayor's Request  
(ID # [24-0416](#))

Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Article 2, Article 3, Article 4, Article 5, Article 8, and Article 10 of the Zoning Ordinances to remove conflicts with the State Building Code.

**RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE**

**AYE:** Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Wilson

9. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0551](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to add Section 8.5 Interim Planning Overlay District (IPOD) and the Brickbottom sub-area.

**RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE**

**AYE:** Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Wilson

**RECUSED:** Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

10. Public Communication (ID # [24-0679](#)) 14 registered voters requesting a Zoning Text Amendment to amend the Zoning Ordinances to add section 8.4.19, Somernova Innovation Sub-Area.

**RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE**

**AYE:** Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Wilson

11. Public Communication (ID # [24-0680](#)) 15 registered voters requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to include 8 Park Street, 10 Park Street, 504 Somerville Avenue, 7-9 Properzi Way, 15-27 Properzi Way, 29 Properzi Way, 26-32 Park Street, 8-14 Tyler Street, 40 Park Street, 15 Dane Street, 7-9 Tyler Street, 30 Dane Street, 24-28 Dane Street, 460 Somerville Avenue, 444 Somerville Avenue, 440 Somerville Avenue, and 502 Somerville Avenue in the Somernova Innovation Sub-Area.

**RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE**

**AYE:** Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Wilson