



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Land Use Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 15, 2024

6:30 PM

Joint Meeting with Planning Board

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair McLaughlin at 6:32 pm and adjourned at 7:56 pm with a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilor Wilson, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Davis and Chair McLaughlin), none absent, and none opposed.

President Ewen-Campen appointed Councilor Scott to replace him on the Land Use Committee for this meeting only.

A recess was taken at 6:33 to allow the Planning Board to convene. The recess ended at 6:35 with a roll call of all members present.

Others present: Andrew Graminski – PPZ, Emily Hutchings – PPZ, Jahan Habib – Planning Board, Michael Capuano - Planning Board, Amelia Aboff - Planning Board, Deborah Howett-Easton - Planning Board, Luc Schuster - Planning Board, Stephanie Widzowski – Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin, Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis, Ward Seven City Councilor Judy Pineda Neufeld, City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson and Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1822](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Land Use Committee Joint Meeting with the Planning Board on December 7, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

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

2. Public Hearings

- 2.1. Public Communication (ID # [23-1830](#)) 15 registered voters requesting a Zoning Text Amendment to amend the Zoning Ordinances to add Section 8.4.19, Climate & Equity Innovation Sub-Area Overlay District.

This item was withdrawn by the applicant.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE WITHDRAWN

- 2.2. Public Communication (ID # [23-1827](#)) 13 registered voters requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 8 Park Street, 10 Park Street, 504 Somerville Avenue, and 7-9 Properzi Way from Mid-Rise 4 (MR4) to Climate & Equity Innovation Sub-Area Overlay District, and 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, 460 Somerville Avenue, 444 Somerville Avenue, 440 Somerville Avenue, 30 Dane Street, and 24-28 Dane Street from Fabrication (FAB) to Climate & Equity Innovation Sub-Area Overlay District.
- This item was withdrawn by the applicant.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE WITHDRAWN**
- 2.3. Public Communication (ID # [23-1810](#)) 234 Pearl Street Realty Trust and Goodpitch, LLC requesting the adoption of an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance Map to change the zoning district of 234 and 236 Pearl Street from Mid-Rise 4 (MR4) to Mid-Rise 6 (MR6).
- This item was withdrawn by the applicant.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE WITHDRAWN**
- 2.4. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0037](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to the Zoning Ordinances to amend Article 9: Use Provisions, and the Permitted Uses tables of all zoning districts, to establish a Recreational Camp for Children use within the Recreational Services use category.
- Emily Hutchings of Planning, Preservation and Zoning said that ISD described this amendment as necessary to address the “missing middle” for childcare. Councilor Davis noted that the designation appears to only be for licensed recreational camps. Ms. Hutchings confirmed that the use would still be licensed under state law and would simply be for recreational camps instead of daycares.
- Chair McLaughlin opened the public hearing at 6:47 pm and closed it at 7:05 pm. Written comment will be accepted at CityClerk@somervillema.gov <<mailto:CityClerk@somervillema.gov>> until noon on March 1. Written comment can also be sent to the Planning Board at Planning@somervillema.gov <<mailto:Planning@somervillema.gov>>. Nine people gave testimony. Many cited concerns over traffic and noise levels unique to recreational camps; others agreed that the noise concerns should be addressed, but said that there is not enough childcare in the city as is or that these kinds of programs are in high demand.
- RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**
- 2.5. Public Communication (ID # [24-0059](#)) Gregg Donovan requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 321 Washington Street from Fabrication (FAB) to Commercial Industry (CI).
- Chair McLaughlin opened the public hearing at 7:07 pm and closed it at

7:49 pm. Written comment will be accepted at CityClerk@somervillema.gov <<mailto:CityClerk@somervillema.gov>> until noon on March 1. Written comment can also be sent to the Planning Board at Planning@somervillema.gov <<mailto:Planning@somervillema.gov>>.

Twenty-three people gave testimony. Many groups were represented, including Art Stays Here, Joy Street Studios, and the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission.

- Ethan Dussault said that FAB and ACE requirements keep Somerville artist-friendly and that changing this parcel to Commercial Industry would harm that.
- Lee Kilpatrick opposed the zoning change and said that FAB helps art spaces thrive.
- Alyson Schultz, an artist, voiced concerns about losing critical space for the art community.
- Nicholas Schectman talked about his own experience being priced out of Somerville and read an excerpt that spoke to the importance of old buildings.
- Jenn Harrington said that Somerville needs the FAB district and urged the preservation of 321 Washington St as an art center.
- Ami Bennitt said that the parcel has enough space to redevelop and keep the art center.
- Amanda Bristow spoke against the zoning change.
- Ellen Waylonis said that she has seen many art spaces pushed out of Somerville and that this zoning change would be harmful to the art community.
- Paula Garbarino spoke to her long experience as a woodworker who recently had to leave Somerville.
- Becky Donner said that FAB is vital to the city and without it, Somerville will lose artists.
- Ada Ren-Mitchell said that arts are important for mental health and are profitable for the city.
- Coleen Palencia spoke against the zoning change.
- Sarah Selby said the zoning change would threaten the art community and talked about the safe space for youth and adults alike in her circus arts classes.
- Gregory Jenkins, Director of the Arts Council, spoke to the importance of the decision to create the FAB district.
- Kirk Etherton said that it felt wrong that the hard work of those who created the FAB district could be undone so easily.
- Jon Link expressed strong opposition to the zoning change.
- Dan Coughlin commented on how FAB is less than 1% of Somerville because of the buildings that were grandfathered in on FAB parcels.
- Chris Dwan spoke to the need for a better process and criticized the idea of “chipping away” at the FAB district parcel by parcel.
- Schuyler Dawson said it took a long time to find a studio space in the city and that Somerville needs more art spaces, not fewer.

- Bill Cavellini said that this change would set a precedent for other FAB areas and called for revising FAB permitted uses to make it work as intended.
- Tori Antonino said that she does not understand why the applicant could not keep the parcel under FAB designation and spoke against losing art spaces.
- Jenn Wood spoke against the zoning change and said that the loss of art space could gather momentum.
- Michele Hansen talked about watching artists get pushed out of Somerville and the need for a better plan for the district.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Referenced Documents:

- Land Use - 2024-02-15 Public Comments (with 24-0059)
- Land Use - 2024-02-15 Public Comments-2 (with 24-0059)
- Land Use - 2024-02-15 Public Comments (with 23-1810)
- Land Use - 2024-02-15 Public Comments (with 23-1827, 23-1830, 24-0059)