



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

May 23, 2018
REPORT OF THE LAND USE COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Lance L. Davis	Chair	Present	
William A. White Jr.	Vice Chair	Absent	
Stephanie Hirsch	Alderman At Large	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One Alderman	Absent	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Ward Two Alderman	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three Alderman	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four Alderman	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five Alderman	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven Alderman	Absent	
Mary Jo Rossetti	Alderman at Large	Absent	
Wilfred N. Mbah	Alderman at Large	Absent	

Others present: Michael Glavin - OSPCD, Dan Bartman - OSPCD, George Proakis - OSPCD, Annie Connor - Legislative Liaison, Rositha Durham - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Aldermen's Chamber and was called to order at 7:26 PM by Chairman Davis and adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Approval of the May 1, 2018 Minutes

RESULT:	TABLED
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205055: That, to assist in considering the proposed zoning overhaul, the Directors of Finance, SomerStat, SPCD and Planning provide this Board with current reports on 1) SomerVision progress, 2) Capital Improvement Plan, 3) Projected revenues from the proposed zoning, and 4) Debt.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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204953: Requesting the adoption of a New Zoning Ordinance (1/2018 update) to supersede the current Zoning Ordinance as originally adopted on March 23, 1990.

Chairman Davis gave a brief summary of the previous committee meeting and noted that the record will remain open until the close of business on Friday, May 25, 2018 to receive additional written comments. Mr. Bartman gave a presentation that contained updated slides resulting from feedback received at the last meeting, new information and new data/information relating to parking. Mr. Bartman stated that comments may be submitted online at www.Somervillezoning.com <<http://www.Somervillezoning.com>> or emailed to Planning@somervillema.gov <<mailto:Planning@somervillema.gov>>.

Mr. Bartman presented data reflecting the number of building types that currently exist in the proposed NR district, including the existing RA lots that currently have buildings containing 3+ units and a breakdown of the building types containing 3+ units in RB. There was discussion of the “evolution” of the actual built environment in the RA and RB districts over time and the degree to which they don’t reflect the characteristics of the respective zoning district. The Committee discussed the merits of mapping new zoning districts that would permit the building type that exists today - such that the majority of existing lots/buildings would be conforming under the new zoning. This might be done by including more building types within a certain zone or by applying different zoning districts to different lots (sometimes referred to as “confetti style mapping”) to more accurately reflect what is on the ground. New York City has famously taken this approach. The primary effect of this would be to make it easier for owners of buildings that otherwise would be non-confirming to make changes to that building. This also would be intended to increase predictability, lending and also to allow uses such as corner stores, as certain lots could be zoned to allow this use.

Mr. Bartment noted that the general theory of zoning is that it is expected that non-conforming structures will eventually disappear and the zone will, over time, move towards conformity. That has not been the experience of many in the city and many of the objections to development that has been happening in the neighborhoods center around buildings and building types that stand out and do not fit within the existing character of the neighborhood. Mr. Bartman noted that, for example, many RB houses had evolved into buildings allowed in the UR (Urban Residence) district. Mr. Bartman also noted that, at the urging of Alderman Scott, the Planning Department has classifying the entire city by lot based on the existing building type and now has that database to use in support of zoning analysis, including if the preference was to employ something more along the lines of a “confetti map.” The Committee further discussed this approach.

Mr. Bartman summarized his conversation with Director of Inspectional Services Goran Smiljic about the hurdles that the building code creates in establishing three plus unit buildings. Mr. Smiljic will provide a summary of these issues over the summer. Mr. Bartman also presented data on the addition of new units in RA and RB going back to 2011. Mr. Bartman presented data on the number and location of triple deckers in the city and the Committee discussed potential approaches to allowing this building type in the proposed NR district.

Mr. Bartman discussed the request to determine how many buildable vacant lots are in NR districts, as well as other considerations relating to lot size. Mr. Bartman suggested waiting to discuss the regulation of on-street parking until all members are present. Mr. Proakis provided some thoughts on the zoning and commented that the committee could continue working to make it better, leading to the Planning Board’s recommendation between mid-June and August 25th.

The Committee suggested that next Land Use meeting should include the city's Transportation and Infrastructure division of OSPCD as well as the Traffic and Parking Department. A possible date for the next meeting may be July 10th.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Handout:

- NR District & Parking Discussion 5-23-18 (with 204953)