



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Land Use Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, July 9, 2024

6:30 PM

Joint Meeting with Planning Board

The meeting took place remotely via Zoom and was called to order at 6:31 PM by Chair McLaughlin and adjourned at 11:18 PM on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Wilson, Pineda Neufeld, Ewen-Campen, and McLaughlin) none opposed and one absent (Councilor Davis).

Others present:

Nick Asermelly, Adam Dash, Dave Kadish, Vladimir Benoit, Marilyn Moedinger, Tony Barros, Stuart Pitchel, Russell Preston, Michael LeBlanc. Planning Board: Michael Capuano – Chair, Amelia Aboff – Vice-Chair, Michael McNeley, Debbie Howitt Easton, Luc Schuster, Jahan Habib –Clerk, Stephen Cary - Liaison. City Staff :Emily Hutchings - OSPCD, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager.

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 # [24-0408](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Land Use Committee Meeting of March 21, 2024.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

2. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-0648](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Land Use Committee Joint Meeting with the Planning Board on May 2, 2024.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

3. Public Hearings

- 3.1. 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.

Councilor Ewen-Campen recused himself from this item due to a relative owning a condo in the Brickbottom artists building.
.Emily Hutchings, Senior Planner, presented the attached presentation and reviewed a correction to the original submission. Luc Shuster from the Planning Board asked why the proposed overlay is mid-rise (MR) 4 and not something higher given the opportunity. Emily Hitchings responded with

neighboring areas being MR 4 and the goal is to put a pause on development for the next 18-months and allow staff to review and thoroughly read all proposals.

Chair McLaughlin opened the public hearing:

- Ethan Dussault- voicing support for this project.
- Polly Pook - spoke out against due to the introduction of MR 4.
- Dan Elton - talked to their opposition as it does not make sense to slow down development, district seems underutilized due to the green line amongst other things, additional concern that artists are getting special treatment.
- Marlena Hubley - said the area is underutilized and does not seem like a good idea to limit development in this area.
- Carlos Sainz Caccia - talked about how large the areas are and the opportunity for housing and open space and is worried the IPOD is limiting development, also believes the area can hold more density given its location to the community path and the T.
- Gregory Jenkins - spoke in support of the IPOD and the intent to control the zoning as is through a special permit promise and encourages others to look at the neighborhood plan that has further details on this area as a district.
- Peter Kim-Santos - hope the overlay sticks to 18 months and is not a band-aid, also would like to see it go to MR 6 in the future.
- Wiley Kilcollins - supports the inclusion of IPOD in this area.
- Jenn Harrington - believes this should have arts spaces in mind and spoke to steps they would like to see in place as the city moves forward with development.
- Joshua Michel - raised a question as to why MR 4 was chosen to block zoning and why MR 6 is not in place for larger and more effective projects.
- David Tatarakis - spoke to how Brickbottom is a great opportunity to increase housing stock given its location to the T side and agrees with earlier comments that this overlay should be MR 6.
- Joel Paul - stated that MR 4 seems low given the location and the housing shortage coupled with the current cost to live.
- Daniel Coughlin - spoke in opposition to the IPOD and questions if it is being used as a tool to push current, private, landowners' out.
- Allison Shultz - talked about how higher zoning is not looking at the environment and is asking for more careful planning and sustainable zoning.
- Christopher Allen - shared thoughts on if IPOD moves forward MR.6 would be reasonable as an amendment.
- Tori Antonino - is hopeful for the intention and thoughtfulness to what the Brickbottom area could look like prior to approving any plans brought by developers.
- Anne Randolph - made mention that art space is being lost throughout the city and supports the IPOD.

With no further comments from the public Chair McLaughlin closed this

public hearing.

Written comment will be accepted at publiccomments@somervillema.gov until noon on July 26. Written comment can also be sent to the Planning Board at planning@somervillema.gov.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3.2. Public
Communication
(ID # [24-0607](#))

Mo Rizkallah requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 5 Homer Square from Neighborhood Residence (NR) to Urban Residence (UR).

Nick Asermelly presented on the multi plex currently zoned as a Neighborhood Residence (NR) and the aim to become compliant and change the zoning district to Urban Residence (UR). He went on to describe the lot as unique with its diamond shape and proximity to Union Square. The goal of this change is to keep 6 units, with 3 floors, a flat roof, and create nicer units.

Chair McLaughlin opened the public hearing.

- Meredith Porter - spoke in opposition in favor of more affordable housing and there are few other UR zoned parcels nearby.
- Tori Antonino - expressed concerns regarding the developer of the project.
- Job Link - is a neighbor to the land and expressed concerns around the developer.
- Philip Parsons - is an abutter to the project and is in opposition to the rezoning

With no further comments from the Public Chair McLaughlin closed this public hearing.

Written comment will be accepted at publiccomments@somervillema.gov until noon on July 26. Written comment can also be sent to the Planning Board at planning@somervillema.gov.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3.3. Public
Communication
(ID # [24-0641](#))

14 registered voters requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 136 School Street from Urban Residence (UR) to Mid-Rise 6 (MR6), 95 Highland Avenue from Neighborhood Residence (NR) to MR6, and 97, 99-99A, 101-103, and 107 Highland Avenue from Mid-Rise 5 (MR5) to MR6.

Adam Dash, Dave Kadish, and Vladimir Benoit all presented the attached slides. Mr. Benoit spoke about the history of the YMCA and the building they are in was built in 1905 and has needed upgrades since 1960. The vast programming across youth and seniors and various other community projects and services needs a larger and more up to space. The YMCA looked at various other locations but ultimately the central location of the

current building is most important, specifically to public housing, the High School, and City Hall. Mr. Kadish spoke on slides outlining the location along Highland and School Street and the various community partnerships. Mr. Dash said this is the first step in the process and if approved will include many other community meetings and processes in the future.

Chair McLaughlin opened the public hearing.

- Wiley Kilcollins - asked why the property on 95 Highland is not being rezoned.
- Carlos Sainz Caccia - spoke in support of the plan and the ability to add additional affordable housing and meet community needs.
- Seth Hurwitz - talked about praise for the plan and the many additions it will bring to the community.
- Jenn Harrington - spoke on their support for the plan and hopes plans will include working with the Arts Council to make the space valuable to the community.
- Thomas Bent - a board member of the YMCA spoke to the board working for many years on this plan and the addition of affordable housing and childcare are important to the YMCA.
- Gregory Jenkins - talked about concerns for the zoning of 95 Highland and any shading issues that may arise as a result.
- Marlena Hubley - raised questions about rezoning and the excitement to have more up to date facilities for members of the community to utilize.
- Joel Paul - speaking in support of and specifically on the addition of affordable housing.
- Christine Carlino - echoed previous statements about how great this project is for the community and its future development.
- Tori Antonino - spoke in support of the project and would like to see an additional story on the Commercial Building to add open space.
- Joshua Michel - spoke in support and highlighted to added housing as a bonus
- Dan Elton - mentioned a shortage of gyms for a city of Somerville's size and expanding the gym facilities would be beneficial for the community.

With no further comments from the Public Chair McLaughlin closed this public hearing.

Written comment will be accepted at publiccomments@somervillema.gov until noon on July 26. Written comment can also be sent to the Planning Board at planning@somervillema.gov.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3.4. Public
Communication
(ID # [24-0642](#))

14 registered voters requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 228, 230, 232, 234, 236 Pearl Street from Mid-Rise 4 (MR4) to Mid-Rise 6 (MR6).

Adam Dash, Marilyn Moedinger, Tony Barros, and Stuart Pitchel spoke to the zoning changes according to the signed Community Benefits Agreement (CBA). Councilor Wilson made a statement that this is zero parking, residents would not be eligible for a parking sticker, but those in affordable housing or with accessibility exemptions would receive waivers.

Chair McLaughlin opened the public hearing.

- Wiley Kilcollins - asks that no zoning change be made until the CBA has been finalized.
- David Tatarakis - spoke to the neglect of Gilman Square and the potential of the neighborhood and the needed development and more housing.
- Seth Hurwitz - also spoke to the neglect of Gilman Square and MR 6 makes sense for the area and future development.
- Joel Paul - spoke in approval of the addition of more density without added traffic.
- Carlos Sainz Caccia - spoke in support of the proposal.
- Christine Carlino - spoke in support of the proposal and various public meetings that have been held related to this item and a fully executed CBA.
- Peter Kim- Santos - talked in favor of the proposal for increased housing and the proximity to the T stop.
- Matthew Carlino - reiterated previous comments that Gilman square has been waiting on more development.
- Tori Antonino - spoke in favor of the project with hope of adding civic space or make improvements to the current civic space and asks for funds for improvement.
- Peter Moulthrop - abutter to proposed rezoning lot and is opposed to the rezoning.

With no further comments from the Public Chair McLaughlin closed this public hearing.

Written comment will be accepted at publiccomments@somervillema.gov until noon on July 26. Written comment can also be sent to the Planning Board at planning@somervillema.gov.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3.5. 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.

Adam Dash, Russell Preston, Michael LeBlanc spoke on the zoning application regarding Somernova innovation Sub-Area. They spoke on the

included presentation.

Chair McLaughlin opened the public hearing.

- Charles Warren- spoke about the presentation being about intent and not impact, the most diverse community of artists will be displaced.
- David Tatarakis- stated they are impressed and strongly in favor.
- Jenn Harrington- spoke to the loss of arts space in Union Square and asks for more consideration of the Zoning before it is approved.
- Caelle Joseph- expressed support for Somernova campus expansion and the numerous ways the Doja has been a benefit and asset to themselves personally and the community at large.
- Emily Akin- spoke to the vibrancy of artists and musicians present at Milk Row and would like more opportunity for residents to speak.
- Marlena Hubley- is impressed with some additions but disappointed in the lowered performance space and affordable housing available.
- Camille Stubbe- direct abutter of the project, commented on the scale of the project, specifically on the height of the building and the future sun shadows and limited outdoor green space available.
- Thomas Wall- spoke to fair labor and wages to those who will work on the construction of the project.
- Stephanie Melikian- spoke about her direct use of the space and the importance of keeping the FAB district.
- Kelsey Lamp- spoke in support of the proposal, the addition of housing and prioritization for pedestrians and cyclists in Somerville.
- Brian Wolff- spoke to the concern of the future business and not working directly with business owners to be a part of the conversation without being displaced.
- Peter Kim Santos- commented on the benefit of added housing and making the buildings higher.
- Jeremy Eagle- utilizes Milk Row as a tenant and spoke to the negative effects of any changes to the present FAB Zoning.
- Ronn Friedlander- rose concerns how current tenants will be affected and what will be done for them.
- Georgia Kennedy - renting artist in Milk Row studio and the threat to affordable housing, FAB District, and all arts community.
- Audrey Ryan - spoke to many concerns on the proposal and the ruin of art spaces and FAB district.
- Blake Evitt - spoke to the need of the Dojo for a youth-oriented space that this project prioritizes.
- Chris Dwan - spoke to their approval and the overall benefit that the project development proposes.
- Emily Doran - mentioned summits that were held in partnership with the Union Square Neighborhood Council (USNC) for developers and business owners to attend and speak on concerns that could be discussed in a CBA, as well as steps to garner feedback from community groups, residents, and businesses.

- Marie-Elle Merchant - USNC, spoke about how the scope of the project is increasing and making it harder to track what is most important to the community, and asks that no zoning be passed until a CBA is reached.
- Michael Joy - musician and tenant on Milk Row studios, spoke to the difficulty of finding art spaces in the city and the need for more dedicated affordable art spaces.
- Sam Epstein -- USNC and the importance of keeping FAB district present for the arts industry.
- Bill Shelton - raises concern about traffic.
- Carlos Sainz Caccia - share thoughts on how the plan does a good job on balancing the concerns and priorities for this project from within the community.
- Bill Cavelleni - USNC, allows for too much development in an area that was not designated for this purpose and the size of this project should be reduced, asks the committee not to vote until an amended proposal and a CBA has been reached.
- Wiley and Jessamy Kilcollins - shared opinions that the plan is going to push artists out of the community, would like the CBA to be fully negotiated before the plan is approved, and should be amended to include more affordable spaces for current tenants.
- Chaton Green- from the Boston Building Trades Union and represents thousands who live in Somerville asking for a project laborer agreement (PLA) to protect workers rights that sets standards the align with the community and CBA.
- Ethan Dussault - USNC member and business owner in Milk Row, asks that they think about rezoning responsibly with artists in mind and having a CBA before voting.
- Jeff Byrnes- spoke in favor of the proposal compared to the original and that Rafi is listening to the community concerns.
- Aaron Weber- spoke in favor of the changes and the additional housing.
- Daniel Coughlin - stated opposition to proposed zoning text amendment and against the change to the FAB district currently present.
- Max Levy - would like a CBA to protect spaces and immediate impact on artists and dedicate a larger portion to spaces and livable spaces.
- Dan Elton - here to support the initiative but with concerns
- Cleo Brigham - stated the need to protect the current FAB Zoning and desire for a CBA to be present before zoning is approved.
- Tracey Stearns - spoke to the importance and the impact of the Dojo community center for the city.
- Cameron DiNardo - stated the current utilization of art spaces is at risk and spoke to the need of zoning that will enrich the city

- culturally and economically.
- Otto Klammer - does not support the plan for development as it currently stands and the extensive construction will disrupt their lives and the community at large, would like the committee to hold off on approval until a CBA can inform the zoning.
 - Matthias Rudolf - member of the USNC and recognizes the attempt Rafi has made to work with the community with this second submission, is still waiting for a CBA agreement before moving forward.
 - Cameron Fischer - spoke to the large scale of the buildings being placed into the neighborhood and is not in support without a CBA and consideration for the current residents.
 - Thomas Bent - speaking in favor of the development and the many construction and permanent jobs that would be present at the onset of this project and multiple other benefits.
 - Linda Kelley - spoke to support this project and the overall importance of the Dojo for the youth.
 - Jacob Bloom - spoke in support of the proposal and echo the collaboration with Rafi on their continued efforts to listen to the community.
 - Matthew McWilliams - stated the need for a CBA before any zoning changes are made.
 - Julie Shapiro - stated that Rafi is not a management project and may look to sell out after completion, a CBA is needed prior to zoning changes being made.
 - Gregory Jenkins - stated support for proposal but also thinks more can be done to support the FAB district.
 - Ami Bennet - advocated for more affordable art spaces and asked the committee to withhold until a CBA can inform the zoning.
 - Joshua Michel - spoke in support of the proposal.
 - Dan Braun - Boulderling Gym staff, stated appreciate for the inclusion in the proposal and is seeking a more concrete inclusion in the proposal to continue to be a tenant.
 - Joel Paul - spoke in support and the additional housing being added and more height could allow more art spaces.
 - Ryan Colon - with Trade and Union and a PLA in place could be great for the community.
 - Daniel Wong - stated the new proposal is an improvement on the first one and highlighted the importance of reducing the cost of housing and adding more housing.
 - Justin Mattarocchia - urged the committee not to approve until a CBA is agreed upon.
 - Michel Chiu - speaking in support of the proposal and the various ways it includes space to meet for groups within the community.
 - Ajda Snyder - spoke to opposition due to the lack of affordable arts

space available within the proposal and the need for a CBA to inform the zoning before moving forward.

- Tori Antonino - spoke to personal experience with Somernova and a developer who aims to work with the community.
- Jeremy Katz - stated concern for existing tenants.
- Meredith Porter - spoke to the extensive work of the USNC and concerns of the art space and building and construction jobs, would like a CBA in place before any changes to zoning.
- Stephanie Irigoyen - shared opinion the second proposal is better than the first one and appreciate the efforts to communicate with the family, would like a CBA done prior to zoning changes.

With no further comments from the Public Chair McLaughlin closed this public hearing.

Written comment will be accepted at publiccomments@somervillema.gov until noon on August 30. Written comment can also be sent to the Planning Board at planning@somervillema.gov.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3.6. 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.

This item was discussed with ID # 24-0679.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

4. 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: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

- Land Use - 2024-07-09 Public Comments (with 24-0679, 24-0680)
- Land Use - 2024-07-09 Public Comments (with 24-0641)
- Land Use - 2024-07-09 Presentation-YMCA (with 24-0641)
- Land Use - 2024-07-09 Public Comments (with 24-0551)
- Land Use - 2024-07-09 Presentation-Brickbottom (with 24-0551)
- Land Use - 2024-07-09 Brickbottom-IPOD_Zoning_Corrected (with 21-0551)
- Land Use - 2024-07-09 Density Bonus - Memo to LUC_Corrected (with 24-0416).pdf
- Land Use - 2024-07-09 Sustainability Amendments - Density Bonus Changes (with 24-0416)