



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

March 4, 2019

REPORT OF THE CONFIRMATION OF APPOINTMENTS AND PERSONNEL MATTERS COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Chair	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Vice Chair	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	City Councilor at Large	Present	

Others present: Councilor Mark Niedergang, George Proakis - OSPCD, Annie Connor - Legislative Liaison, Rositha Durham - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Scott and adjourned at 8:50 PM.

The meeting was changed from a Committee of the Whole to a regular committee meeting due to not having enough Councilors present for a Committee of the Whole quorum.

207541: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Zachary Baum to the position of Zoning Board of Appeals alternate member.

Councilor Rossetti recused herself. Mr. Proakis introduced Mr. Baum who is one of the owners/managers of Bow Market. He is also a resident, parent and interested in the Somerville community. He has been actively involved in Union Square Main Streets for a while. This appointment would fill the seat previously held by Pooja Phaltankar. Councilor Ewen-Campen stated that Mr. Baum has been extremely generous to the Somerville community. He was also concerned about the public's perception of having a developer on the Zoning Board of Appeals and the possibility of conflicts. Councilor Niedergang was also concerned about biasness and asked if he was a member of Somerville Chamber of Commerce, which he is not. Mr. Baum asked about other developments in the last 10 years. He was involved in residential property on Craigie Street when his partner's home needed to be rebuilt due to a fire. There were a few other residential projects in Cambridge. There were discussions about his involvement with the Nibble Kitchen which is a tenant in Bow Market. There were questions about ZBA being special municipal employees and Chair Scott will reach out to the city solicitor on this matter.

All committee members stated Mr. Baum would bring a lot to the city but all were uncomfortable having a developer on the ZBA.

There was a voice vote and all voted against this item.

RESULT:

NOT APPROVED

207542: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Drew Kane to the position of Zoning Board of Appeals alternate member.

Councilor Rossetti recused herself. Mr. Proakis introduced Mr. Kane who lives in Ward 2. He just resigned from a position at Utile and is now working for the City of Cambridge. Mr. Kane would be replacing Ms. Brockelman's position as she moves to a full member. Mr. Kane talked about how his professional background lends well to be on the ZBA. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked Mr. Kane about Union Neighborhood plan and Boynton Yards master plan. Mr. Kane stated he is not actively involved in US2 development. The chair asked Mr. Kane about being the design planning director for Utile and running the day-to-day operations. There were also discussions about intense frustrations about the project. Chair Scott recused himself from some of the questions relating to being an abutter to the property. Councilor Ewen-Campen expressed concerns that he would like to see a lot more affordable housing. Chair Scott returned and expressed his concerns about the Union Square planning process and that the community is not happy with the process.

There was a voice vote with two voting in favor (Mhab and Ewen-Campen) and two voting against (Clingan and Scott). This item tied and did not pass.

RESULT:

NOT APPROVED

207539: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Anne Brockelman to the position of Zoning Board of Appeals full member.

Councilor Rossetti recused herself. This position is to fill an open slot from Mr. Rossetti whose term has expired and he will not be returning. Ms. Brockelman is currently an alternate member of the Zoning Board of Appeals. Some members of the committee were not on the committee previously and reviewed the video from a previous meeting to prepare themselves for this agenda item. All members Chair Scott, Councilors Ewen-Campen, Mbah and Clingan voted in favor of this appointment.

RESULT:

APPROVED

207540: Requesting confirmation of the re-appointment of Danielle Fillis Evans to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Councilor Rossetti recused herself. Mr. Proakis introduced Ms. Evan who has been on the board since January 2008. She used to work in Somerville's planning department and has worked in Watertown and Bedford. The chair asked Ms. Evans her views on the situations in which variances should be granted. She spoke about changing projects to make it more acceptable. There are criteria in 40A to be satisfied. Councilor Clingan inquired about a 139 Shore Drive back in 2012. Ms. Evans was absent when this property was being discussed. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked about serving on the board and contentious moments in the meetings. Councilor Niedergang asked about serving on the board for 11 years and if she observed changes over time.

She responded that the meetings are run well and the workload is heavier. Other properties were discussed in the meeting looking for Ms. Evans feedback on how the matters were handled or not. There was also a discussion about how neighbors' concerns were disregarded on some properties.

There was a voice vote with 3 members voting in favor and the chair voted against. This item was approved.

RESULT:

APPROVED

207302: Requesting the appointment of Jessica Turner to the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust.

Mr. Proakis introduced Ms. Turner who was recommended by the Mayor. Ms. Turner is a resident of Clarendon Hill Housing Authority and a mother of three children. She has stepped up to coordinate efforts from residents and very interested in Somerville's low income community. Ms. Turner believes there is not a voice for people who in in low income involving Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Councilor Rossetti got to know Ms. Turner over the last few years who is very passionate about affordable housing. The committee asked if she would be able to attend the Affordable Housing Trust Fund meetings that are held once a month. Ms. Turner is available to attend the meetings as long as she can bring her children. Ms. Turner talked about growing up in foster care, and living in public housing. She is also involved in the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) and is the co-president of Clarendon Residents United. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked Ms. Turner about her thoughts regarding climate change. Ms. Turner stated she did not believe climate change related to the affordable housing position. She also stated that the green new deal has a political perspective. Chair Scott read a statement from a letter Ms. Turner sent last October accusing the aldermen of conflict of interest. She was given an opportunity to explain her points from the letter. Ms. Turner believe that the aldermen were advocating for unions outside of Somerville more so than Somerville low income residents.

There was a voice vote with 4 voted in favor and the chair voted against. This item was approved.

RESULT:

APPROVED

207511: That the Administration meet with the Committee on Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters to discuss the implications of designating every commission's members as Special Municipal Employees.

The administration was not prepared to discuss this matter. They were due to discuss this matter this morning but due to the weather, it was rescheduled to 3/18.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Handouts:

- Evans, Danielle Fillis ZBA CV (with 207540)
- Turner, Jessica AAC SAHTF Recommendation (with 207302)

- Aff Housing Trust Fund (with 207302)
- Zoning Board of Appeals description (with 207539, 207540, 207541, 207542)