



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

June 6, 2018

REPORT OF THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Ben Ewen-Campen	Chair	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Vice Chair	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven Alderman	Present	

Others present: Alderman Mark Niedergang, Alderman Stephanie Hirsch, Alan Inacio - OSPCD, Mike Feloney - OSPCD, Penny Snyder - OSPCD, Hannah Carrillo - OSPCD, Bryant Gaspard - OSPCD, Adam Polinski - OSPCD, Evelyn Persoff - OSPCD, Annie Connor - Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 5:30 PM by Chairman Ewen-Campen and adjourned at 6:40 PM.

Approval of the April 30, 2018 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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205788: Requesting acceptance of the 2018-2022 HUD Consolidated Plan and the 2018-2019 1-Year Action Plan for the CDBG, HOME Investment Partnership, and Emergency Solutions Entitlement Grant programs.

Mr. Inacio reviewed the highlights of the consolidated plan; which covers the next five program years. CDBG funding has been increased by 10% by the Federal Government, home funding has increased by 25% and emergency funding has been level funded. The increase in funding to Somerville is proportional to the federal increase. Mr. Inacio explained that there are several ways for program to become eligible for funding and that some are tied to census data. The last census data available is from 2013-2014. Currently, Somerville is operating under pre-2010 data, however it is expected HUD will cut over to the 2010 census data sometime during this 5-year plan. Asked about the amount of flexibility the city has, Mr. Inacio stated that the assumption is that, for this plan, that grant would stay level funded for 5 years, but that could change. When the final allocation is in, adjustments could be made. Generally, there is a fair amount of flexibility (up to 25%) of the grant for any programming 'bucket'. Beyond that, an amendment request would have to be filed. The general approach is to try to maximize the flexibility of the grant by using several categories on the CDBG side. Housing funds may only

be used for housing programs and some projects may be funded using a combination of CDBG and CPA funds.

Two community forums were held, on March 1st and 8th of this year, with no attendees at the March 8th forum. A presentation was made on May 17th and the record was left open until June 18 to receive additional comments.

RESULT:

APPROVED

205334: That the Committee on Housing and Community Development investigate the condition of affordable housing units in the City, gathering testimony and data, to determine whether there is an affordable housing crisis that constitutes a public emergency, which may inform any home rule petitions related to affordable housing.

Mr. Feloney told the committee that his department focused on questions that were raised at the April 30, 2018 Public Hearing held to discuss affordable housing. The Housing Division noted that, given their daily work load, it will take some effort to pull a complete report together, however this draft is a solid starting point. Chairman Ewen-Campen noted that the BOA just approved the Home Rule Petition for the Real Estate Transfer Fee (RETF), so one purpose of gathering this information is to create an easy-to-digest summary document that informs residents and legislators that substantial study and due diligence went into considering this question. The original order was to determine if an emergency existed and Chairman Ewen-Campen stated that the committee deliberated whether or not such an emergency exists, but it's clear that there is a dramatic, increasing shortage of housing at nearly all affordability levels. Alderman Ballantyne questioned how to convince someone, who has no context of what's going on in Somerville, that there is a real problem, and suggested that it might be a good idea to break the problem into different groups, e.g., within the city, outside the city, regional. Adding the regional aspect would lend support to the city's argument for the RETF Home Rule Petition, currently before the legislature by making the issue broader. Alderman Clingan said that it's important to show that Somerville wants to maintain its diversity and provide economic equality for all residents. Chairman Ewen-Campen spoke about the need to have both a value statement, as well as a solid quantitative understanding of the housing data, and noted that the city is rapidly and dramatically losing its economic diversity. Chairman Ewen-Campen asked the committee members to review the information presented here prior to the next meeting of the committee.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

205100: That the Administration appear before this Board to discuss a possible Transit and Pedestrian Advisory Group.

Alderman Niedergang spoke about participating in an informal group (aka 'the Ped In The Shed') with Alderman Hirsch and members of the public to discuss these issues and stated his desire to have a formal group, sanctioned by the Administration, take up the cause. Alderman Hirsch stated that traffic issues and a major concern of the city's residents when thinking about the quality of life here. She stated that the MBTA informed her that the city needs to articulate its priorities, i.e., the more organized the city is in presenting its case, the more favorable the response will be.

Mr. Polinski spoke about the need to allocate space to bus riders and said that it's beneficial to think about walkers and riders together. He will research how other cities handle transit/pedestrian issues. Mr. Polinski thinks that it's important to work with the city's Bicycle Committee and the MBTA. He acknowledged that modification of some streets and sidewalks might be necessary to accomplish any desired goals and suggested that the next step should be to consider this idea along with the Vision Zero planning process. Individuals from 'the shed' could get involved with putting the plan together, since this is a community oriented process. Anyone who would like to be involved in the Vision Zero process may contact the city's Transportation and Infrastructure Department. Asked about a time-line, Mr. Polinski informed the committee that the Vision Zero Task Force aims to have recommendations by the end of 2018, after which a possible Pedestrian Advisory Group could be formed to help institute these recommendations.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Handouts:

- BOA HDC public hearing follow-up_6 6 18 Draft
- HUD Consolidated Action Plan-2018-2022 presentation (with 205788)