



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

February 16, 2021
REPORT OF THE LAND USE COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Ben Ewen-Campen	Chair	Present	
Lance L. Davis	Vice Chair	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	

Others present: Khushbu Webber-Mayor’s Office, Oliver Sellers-Garcia-Sustainability and Environment, Dan Bartman-OSPCD, Ellen Schachter-OSPCD, Kelley Donato-OSPCD, Bryant Gaspard- Fair Housing Commission, Ithzel Polanco-Cabados-OSPCD, and Mikey Feloney-OSPCD.

The meeting was held virtually and was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Chairperson Ewen-Campen and adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Approval of the January 19, 2021 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Electric Vehicle-Related Zoning

210940: Requesting approval of amendments to the Zoning Ordinance for new changes, corrections and clarifications.

The amendments discussed are attached to tonight’s agenda.

Mr. Bartman stated they were debating if they could add electrical charging stations inside parking garages. These would be called accessory structures. There were discussions about adding recharging stations to existing gas stations. The debate is about how recharging stations could be regulated or if they should be regulated. There is some desire to put the recharging stations in and OSPCD has been working with Sustainability and Environment to answer some outstanding questions.

Mr. Sellers-Garcia stated that technology for rapidly charging changes very quickly. He recommended removing the surface parking limitation from the recharging station and tightening the definition so it applies to fast charging station. Mr. Sellers-Garcia stated its important to

define the different charges out there, level 2 and level 3. Somerville already has a level 2 charging station that will charge a car within 3 hours. Level 3 charges a car in 30 minutes. Level 2 would be where you can leave your car for a long time because it's much cheaper for the power and no land needed for the station itself. Level 3 will be like a gas station and more short term. Level 2 charging would be for residents. Level 3 may be along highway corridors or where there is cheap real estate. Mr. Sellers-Garcia stated they do not want to give incentive to people to buy personal vehicles. Mr. Sellers-Garcia stated he has spoken to several fast charging providers and there could be a real cost barrier to build in a garage vs. parking lot.

Chair Ewen-Campen offered a scenario of Ubers and Lyfts who cruise around Somerville and may need a charge. Mr. Sellers-Garcia stated given the cost of EV fast charging, he does not think we'll be the first in the area to draw too much traffic.

Councilor White suggested a general discussion of having gas stations with level 3 charging stations. This could also include level 2 charging station with existing parking lots.

Mr. Bartman stated there are a number of things about the definition of a gas station that could be used regarding land use.

Mr. Bartman stated that level 3 chargers can be put in a parking lot. Councilor White asked from a land use perspective, what would be the problem of putting in a level 3 charger, and what would be the land use issue.

Chair Ewen-Campen stated the amendment before the committee, that someone could put in level chargers to existing parking lots, but cannot put out land just for electric parking.

Councilor Davis stated that it's probably not the best use with Somerville as a densely populated area.

Mr. Sellers-Garcia would like to make charging an option for residents to make the choice themselves. He believes there may be a demand from Somerville residents. The goal is to get more charging stations in Somerville.

There will be a public hearing on March 2nd to hear from the public.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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211231: Requesting approval of amendments to the Zoning Ordinance for new edits, corrections, and clarifications.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Displacement and Fair Housing Mitigation

211133: That the Director of SPCD discuss with the Land Use Committee the fair housing amendment recently passed in Boston that requires new developments to be reviewed for impacts on displacement and housing discrimination.

Chair Ewen-Campen provide a brief introduction stating that at the last meeting, there was a lengthy discussion with Boston city councilor about fair housing order that was recently passed. The basic idea in Boston is when developers put in an application, they would have to choose from a menu of fair housing proposals. The committee will make a recommendation on the fair

housing components, which scales by the size of the development and location. Chair Ewen-Campen and Mr. Bartman reached out to the office of housing sustainability for a working group and they are starting to come up with proposals to present to the committee.

Mr. Feloney has reviewed Boston's proposal and would like to hear the committee members thoughts. His thoughts are: term used inter-division and department effort and housing leadership in this effort. He also mentioned they now have fully functioning fair housing commission staff members with 3 out of 5 being persons of color.

Chair Ewen-Campen raised a number of questions for the housing/OSPCD to start thinking about ways to be more creative to put together a menu of options. He suggested they take a look at menu of options like in Boston, 3 buckets, more affordable, more family sized units and marketing components, public pledge for 1st time owner buyers, rent burden families, voucher holders, above and beyond, right of first refusal. Questions were asked which are doable for the City of Somerville? What are the policies that the city can request of the developers moving forward? What size developments should the city focus on? Also, can these concepts apply to commercial development?

Mr. Feloney stated that one of the assessment tools would be to address displacement, size of development, and condo conversions. They are beginning to capture information on some areas outside of the transformative area.

Chair Ewen-Campen stated that going through Boston's documents shows how much Somerville has already achieved. He will follow up offline and start the process on this matter.

Councilor McLaughlin asked is there a fundamental difference between Boston and Somerville than what we are capable of doing?

Councilor White suggested having the city solicitor's office be involved earlier in this process.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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210930: That the Director of SPCD commission independent Community Impact Studies for each upcoming Neighborhood Plan and large-scale redevelopment effort, to quantify possible displacement, rent increase, and other negative outcomes, and to propose mitigation strategies.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Tattoo Parlors on Pedestrian Streets

211136: That the Director of SPCD discuss with the Land Use Committee whether tattoo parlors should need a Special Permit to operate on Pedestrian Streets and in other areas.

Councilor Niedergang submitted this item after receiving a letter about a tattoo parlor in Magoun Square. He talked to Sarah White about personal services such as nail and hair salons that are permitted on pedestrian streets. It was stated that a tattoo parlor would be permitted in commercial areas but not permitted on pedestrian streets. Mr. Bartman stated that body art services requires a special permit in various zoning districts, in most of the squares along the main street.

Councilor Davis stated his views are that a tattoo parlor on pedestrian street is appropriate, like newsstands, record shops or restaurants. Mr. Bartman stated this is identified in the ordinance and the reasoning from prior, do not find them as detrimental as in previous ordinance.

Councilor Niedergang motioned and it was approved on a roll call vote with five members voting in favor suggesting the administration review the city's zoning treatment of body art and come back to committee with a change for the better.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE