



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Land Use Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 5, 2023

6:30 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair McLaughlin at 6:30 pm and adjourned at 6:58 pm with a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilor Wilson, Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Ewen-Campen, and Chair McLaughlin), 1 absent (Councilor Davis), and none opposed.

Councilor Davis was absent because he was attending a Ward 6 community meeting.

Others present: Neha Singh – Mayor’s Office, Dan Bartman – OSPCD, Tom Galligani – OSPCD, Doug Gensler – North River Company, Stephanie Widzowski – Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Matthew McLaughlin, Ben Ewen-Campen, Beatriz Gomez Mouakad and Jake Wilson
Absent: Vice Chair Lance L. Davis

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1417](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Land Use Committee Meeting of September 21, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED
AYE: Chairperson McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward Five City Councilor Gomez Mouakad and City Councilor At Large Wilson
ABSENT: Vice Chair Davis

2. Public Communication (ID # [23-0940](#)) NRL WSC 200 Inner Belt Prop, LLC requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 200 Inner Belt Road from Commercial Industry (CI) to High-Rise (HR).

Councilor Ewen-Campen recused himself, as his mother is a property owner on the list of abutters. Dir. Galligani said that the developer team hosted the recommended community meeting to touch base with residents in which much public feedback was given. The developer had said that they would follow up with residents, discussing how to modify zoning to both meet their goals and address concerns about unlimited development. Doug Gensler, representing the developer, said they are scheduling a community meeting with Ward Two City Councilor Scott this month. He added that their objective in collaborating with the city is to seek additional funding for the bridge project as a community benefit. There will be another round of funding next spring to pursue, which would ensure that sites adjacent to the bridge could support housing. Mr. Gensler said that this is not required by the state, but is encouraged.

Councilor Wilson summarized his own takeaways from the community meeting, including frustration over a lack of a small area plan for Brickbottom and concern for the impact on 86 Joy St., and encouraged the developer to relay short- and long-term plans clearly to Joy St tenants.

Chair McLaughlin asked about the applicant’s intent for this item. Mr. Gensler requested that the item be kept in committee while furthering conversations with the community so that an alternate solution can be developed.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

- 3. Order (ID # [23-0612](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Davis, Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Strezo, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Ewen-Campen and Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Director of Planning, Preservation and Zoning draft an amendment to the Zoning Ordinances for transit oriented height and density bonuses for additional affordable housing and other enumerated community benefits.

Taken together with item 22-1593. Dir. Bartman said that PPZ will be able to focus energy on this item this coming fall. He also received feedback from advocates and members of the public and said that his department is trying to determine the scope and nature of bonuses. Dir. Bartman noted that the two planners approved for PPZ have already “profoundly” expanded the department’s capacity. He spoke to how this and other items are interconnected with the MBTA Communities Act, which has made timing difficult. Chair McLaughlin announced that there will be a public hearing for item 22-1593 related to the MBTA Communities Act on October 19.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

- 4. Order (ID # [23-0052](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Clingan, Councilor Davis, Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Kelly, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Scott, Councilor Strezo and Councilor Wilson

That this City Council's Committee on Land Use work with the Director of Planning, Preservation and Zoning to draft an amendment to the Zoning Ordinances to remove the prohibition on more than four unrelated adults living together.

Dir. Bartman said that the removal of this prohibition is also required by the MBTA Communities Act. He said that an amendment was submitted for the October 19 public hearing with the Planning Board. Chair McLaughlin asked about overcrowding protections, which Dir. Bartman addressed by talking about standards in the building and sanitary codes. He said that these standards are more equitable because they are based on square footage per person instead.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

5. Order
(ID # [22-1593](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen
That the Director of Planning, Preservation and Zoning update this Council on current draft zoning requirements of the MBTA Communities Act.

Taken together with item 23-0612.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

6. Mayor's
Communication
(ID # [23-0356](#))

Conveying the Somerville Linkage Nexus Study Final Report.

Councilor Wilson commented that global market and real estate conditions have been responsible for any slowdowns, not linkage fees.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

7. Order
(ID # [23-0459](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin
That the Director of Planning, Preservation and Zoning update this Council on the status of the property on Palmer Court, purchased by the city for the purpose of creating green space.

Dir. Galligani said that construction documents were completed on August 30, and he described what is included in the plans for the property, including new yard hydrants, fencing, and ADA compliant space. The city has received one bid so far and is expected to award the contract soon. Dir. Galligani said that PSUF is in communication with garden leaders, who are aware that the city plans to start construction after the growing season. Updates can be found on the SomerVoice page for the Glen Park Community Garden Expansion. Chair McLaughlin said that there have been concerns at the current community garden regarding maintenance, and he requested that those issues be addressed as well.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

8. Public
Communication
(ID # [23-0635](#))

Union Square One Development, LLC requesting the adoption of a Zoning Text Amendment to Section 8.17. g. iii to permit variations to build out regulations by special permit in the CC5 District, USQ sub-area.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE

AYE: Chairperson McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward Five City Councilor Gomez Mouakad and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: Vice Chair Davis

Referenced Documents:

- Land Use - 2023-10-05 Public Comments (with 23-0940)
- Land Use - 2023-10-05 Public Comments-2 (with 23-0940)