



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Land Use Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 20, 2025

6:30 PM

Joint Meeting with the Planning Board

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair McLaughlin at 6:33pm and adjourned at 7:43pm on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Davis, Sait, Wilson, Clingan, and McLaughlin), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

Councilor Wilson joined the meeting at 6:39pm.

The committee went into recess at 6:34pm and returned at 6:35 on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Davis, Sait, Clingan, and McLaughlin), 0 opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor Wilson).

The committee again went into recess at 7:00pm and returned at 7:01pm on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Davis, Sait, Wilson, Clingan, and McLaughlin), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

Others present: Samantha Carr - City Council Land Use Analyst, Andrew Graminski - Planner, Dan Bartman - Deputy Director of Planning and Zoning, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager.

Roll Call

Present: Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin, Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait, Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis and Jesse Clingan
Absent: City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-1680](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Land Use Committee Meeting of November 21, 2024.

RESULT: ACCEPTED
AYE: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Five City Councilor Sait, Ward Six City Councilor Davis and Clingan
ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Wilson

2. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-1766](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Land Use Committee Joint Meeting with the Planning Board of December 5, 2024.

RESULT: ACCEPTED
AYE: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Five City Councilor Sait, Ward Six City Councilor Davis and Clingan
ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Wilson

3. Public Hearing

3.1. Public
Communication
(ID # [24-1584](#))

Horace-Ward LLC, Bealm Realty, LLC, Delhi Properties, LLC, and Delhi Properties II, LLC requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 11 Horace Street, 5-7, 9, 13, and 15 Ward Street, and 15 and 21 South Street from Mid-Rise 4 (MR4) to Mid-Rise 6 (MR6).

Attorney Adam Dash and Architect Brian Slozak presented slides outlining the requested changes, the slides are titled *Land Use 2025-02-20 Zoning Map Amendment (with 24-1584)*.

Chair McLaughlin opened the hearing at 6:54pm.

Three residents spoke in the public hearing. A representative of the Union Square Neighborhood Council, Michele Hansen, shared community meetings that have been held, and the applicant is currently working together to reach a Community Benefit Agreement moving forward. Tori Antonino and Crystal Huff both spoke of the importance of following the green roofs ordinance and the danger of using rat poison during construction and the negative impact it has.

Chair McLaughlin closed the hearing at 6:59pm.

Comments will be accepted until 9 am on 2/28 and must be submitted to publiccomments@somervillema.gov.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Recommendation Needed

4. Mayor's Request
(ID # [24-1448](#))

Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Sections 2.1 and 11.1 of the Zoning Ordinance to improve the regulation of bicycle parking.

Director Bartman stated this change is clarifying language on how bike racks can be arranged and oriented and improve the regulation of bicycle parking. Councilor Wilson asked a clarifying question about the use of asphalt for bike racks, Planner Andrew Graminski shared edits to the language are eligible to still be able to be made and Director Bartman further elaborated the type of materials used and would follow up. Councilor Davis asked if this part of the language is also addressing bike racks outside of buildings, rather as written as inside the buildings. Councilor Wilson responded that the concern for asphalt is for exterior bike racks.

*Chair McLaughlin made a motion **that the Planning Department give an opinion if the Council can dictate standards and materials used for outdoor bike facilities**. Motion was approved on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Davis, Sait, Wilson, Clingan, and McLaughlin). 0 opposed and 0 absent.*

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Five City Councilor Sait, Ward Six City Councilor Davis and Clingan

5. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1447](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Section 3.2.6 Building Types of the Zoning Ordinance to allow the building types permitted in the Neighborhood Residence (NR) zoning district to also be permitted in the Urban Residence (UR) zoning district.

Dan Bartman explained that the amendment was in response to a Councilor's request and developed with input from Inspectional Services to efficiently address non-conformance issues buildings face. It aims to assist property owners in down-zoning to better align with zoning regulations and supports the city's broader upzoning goals.

Councilor Wilson inquired about the impact on variances and special permits. Director Bartman responded that this change should reduce the city's permit burden, as nonconforming properties will be able to make changes by right without needing multiple permits.

Chair McLaughlin raised concern from the public hearing about housing production. Director Bartman clarified that this amendment allows homeowners to convert their homes into multi-unit buildings over time, facilitating the development of housing, including new triple-decker homes on lots previously occupied by one-story commercial buildings or vacant properties under old zoning.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Five City Councilor Sait, Ward Six City Councilor Davis and Clingan

Requested to be Withdrawn

6. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1544](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Articles 6, 9, and 10 of the Zoning Ordinance to establish a new Research & Development zoning district.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE

7. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1461](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Articles 2, 3-6, and 9 of the Zoning Ordinance to revise the regulations for arts and creative enterprise, office, and residential uses.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILEFor Discussion

8. Order
(ID # [25-0085](#))
- By Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Davis and Councilor Wilson
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.
- Chair McLaughlin introduced Samantha Carr as the City Council's new Land Use Analyst, noting she will assist with new projects moving forward. Director Bartman provided updates on ongoing projects, including collaboration with Medford and establishing transit areas in the ordinance, with plans to continue exploring this in the coming months. Councilors Davis and Clingan discussed transit-oriented upzoning, which has been in progress for over a year, and asked about the timeline for a proposal. Director Bartman explained that the upzoning spans multiple administrations and is on track to produce tangible results by the next fiscal year. Councilor Davis shared thoughts on increasing density, referencing the high-rise in Davis Square and 90 Washington Street, and discussed using height to address housing needs in additional areas. Councilor Wilson expressed support for adding housing near transit-oriented areas. Chair McLaughlin and Councilor Sait both expressed optimism about the progress of the amendment and ongoing discussions to identify areas for upzoning and modify the Zoning Ordinances.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Place on File

9. Officer's
Communication
(ID # [25-0120](#))
- Planning Board conveying recommendations for items #24-1447 and #24-1448.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

10. Officer's
Communication
(ID # [24-1280](#))
- Planning Board conveying recommendations for items #24-0679 and #24-0680.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

11. Officer's
Communication
(ID # [24-0854](#))
- Planning Board conveying recommendations for item #24-0416.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

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| 12. | Public Communication
(ID # 24-1577) | Greentown Labs submitting comments re: items #24-0680 and #24-0679, a Zoning Map and Zoning Text amendment to create the Somernova Innovation Sub-Area. |
| | | RESULT: <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED</u> |
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| 13. | Public Communication
(ID # 24-1256) | 95 individuals, including 61 residents, along with Cambria Hotel, Aeronaut Brewery, and Union Square Main Streets submitting comments re: items #24-0680 and #24-0679, a Zoning Map and Zoning Text amendment to create the Somernova Innovation Sub-Area. |
| | | RESULT: <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED</u> |
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| 14. | Public Communication
(ID # 24-1221) | 3 residents submitting comments re: item 24-0679, a Zoning Text amendment to create the Somernova Innovation Sub-Area. |
| | | RESULT: <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED</u> |
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| 15. | Public Communication
(ID # 24-1091) | 4 individuals submitting comments re: item #24-0551, an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to add Section 8.5 Interim Planning Overlay District (IPOD) and the Brickbottom sub-area. |
| | | RESULT: <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED</u> |
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| 16. | Public Communication
(ID # 24-0919) | Susan Lee submitting comments re: items #24-0680 and #24-0679, a Zoning Map and Zoning Text amendment to create the Somernova Innovation Sub-Area. |
| | | RESULT: <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED</u> |
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| 17. | Public Communication
(ID # 24-0899) | 13 individuals, including 9 residents, submitting comments re: items #24-0680 and #24-0679, a Zoning Map and Zoning Text amendment to create the Somernova Innovation Sub-Area. |
| | | RESULT: <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED</u> |

Referenced Documents:

- Land Use 2025-02-20 Zoning Map Amendment (with 24-1584)