



# City of Somerville, Massachusetts

## City Council Land Use Committee

### Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 7, 2023

6:30 PM

#### Joint Meeting with the Planning Board

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair McLaughlin at 6:31 pm and adjourned at 7:23 pm with a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilor Wilson, Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Davis and Chair McLaughlin), none absent, and none opposed.

A recess was taken from 6:32 to 6:34 to allow the Planning Board to convene, and another one from 6:52 to 6:53 to allow the Planning Board to adjourn. Both recesses ended with roll calls with all members present.

Others present: Neha Singh – Mayor’s Office, Jahan Habib – Planning Board, Michael Capuano - Planning Board, Amelia Aboff - Planning Board, Deborah Howett-Easton - Planning Board, Luc Schuster - Planning Board, Sarah Lewis – PPZ, Tom Galligani – OSPCD, Nina Gonzalez, Fern Supawanich – Commonwealth Clayworks, Stephanie Widzowski – Clerk of Committees.

#### Roll Call

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

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1710](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Land Use Committee Meeting of November 16, 2023.

**RESULT:** ACCEPTED

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

#### 2. Public Hearings

- 2.1. Zoning Ordinance (ID # [23-1625](#)) By Councilor Pineda Neufeld Amending Section 7.2.7 of the Zoning Ordinances to add Shared Workspace & Arts Education to Table 7.2.7 Permitted Uses.

Chair McLaughlin opened the public hearing at 6:47 pm and closed it at 6:48 with no testimony given. Written comment will be accepted until December 15 at noon, and can be sent to [PublicComments@somervillema.gov](mailto:PublicComments@somervillema.gov). Mr. Capuano of the Planning Board invited the public to share comments with the Planning Board as well ([Planning@somervillema.gov](mailto:Planning@somervillema.gov)).

Councilor Wilson explained that an applicant for a permit in the CALA building, formerly the Powder House Community School, was rejected during the Plan Review phase on the grounds that the shared workspace and arts education the applicant envisioned was not allowed on the property. He said that Dir. Bartman identified a “tweak” to the zoning to allow the combined use. Nina Gonzalez and Fern Supawanich, the owner of Commonwealth Clayworks, spoke to the business’s impact on the community and the importance of using the CALA building. They said that without the zoning change, they would not be able to offer classes or have a shared art workspace.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked for clarification on how the term “shared workspace” may be interpreted. Nina Gonzalez said that their intention for a shared workspace is to allow experienced potters to use clay and equipment in the space, not for office space. Dir. Lewis said that the focus on art education is key here, and Councilor Davis added that language on a shared art space already exists in Sec. 9.2.2.f (Arts & Creative Enterprise Use Categories) of the Zoning Ordinance. Ms. Aboff of the Planning Board said that the separate definitions for shared workspaces and coworking may qualify for revision in the future.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

2.2. Public Communication (ID # [23-1617](#))

Charles Zammuto requesting the adoption of an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance Map to change the zoning district of 563-565 Broadway from Urban Residence (UR) to Mid-Rise 4 (MR4).

Chair McLaughlin opened the public hearing at 6:50 pm and closed it at 6:51 with no testimony given. Written comment will be accepted until December 15 at noon, and can be sent to [PublicComments@somervillema.gov](mailto:PublicComments@somervillema.gov). Mr. Capuano of the Planning Board invited the public to share comments with the Planning Board as well ([Planning@somervillema.gov](mailto:Planning@somervillema.gov)).

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

3. Item to be Withdrawn

3.1. Public Communication (ID # [23-1305](#))

John Fragione and Agostino Feola, Trustees of Frala Realty Trust, requesting the adoption of an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance Map to change the zoning district of 295-297 Medford Street and 93 Walnut Street from Mid-Rise 3 (MR3) to Mid-Rise 5 (MR5).

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE WITHDRAWN**

4. Other Items

- 4.1. Public Communication (ID # [23-1306](#)) Mai Lau, 635 Somerville Avenue LLC, requesting the adoption of an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance Map to change the zoning district of 627 Somerville Avenue from Neighborhood Residence (NR) to Mid-Rise 3 (MR3).

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

- 4.2. Zoning Ordinance (ID # [23-0791](#)) By Councilor Ewen-Campen and Councilor Wilson Amending the Zoning Ordinances Section 10.3, Development Standards, and Table 10.4.1. to include vegetated roofs.

Councilor Ewen-Campen reviewed changes to the amendment that were based on feedback from previous committee discussion. He noted that the green score multiplier now increases for each depth. Councilor Gomez Mouakad expressed concerns that the ordinance as written would lead rooftop green space to replace ground-level green space in new construction. She suggested adding a clause to require vegetated roofs in addition to ground-level green space to protect public access. Councilor Ewen-Campen said that the amendment applies to mid-rise and high-rise districts for projects that will not create much publicly accessible green space in the first place. Councilor Wilson said that there have been challenges creating public green space in the city, and the definition of “green space” may need reworking, but the city should also value green space on private property. Dir. Galligani added that another impact might be less usable space on the ground. He shared a statement from the Administration on concerns with the proposed ordinance regarding enforcement and preemption with the building code.

*Chair McLaughlin moved to replace the amendment before the Committee with the text of attachment titled “Land Use - 2023-12-07 Vegetated Roofs Changes (with 23-0791)”. The motion was approved with 5 in favor (Councilor Wilson, Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Davis and Chair McLaughlin), none opposed and none absent. Councilor Ewen-Campen then moved to change “eight percent” in Sec. 10.3.8.a to “eighty percent”. He explained that the change was to correct a typo. The motion was approved with 5 in favor (Councilor Wilson, Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Davis and Chair McLaughlin), none opposed and none absent.*

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED AS AMENDED**

Referenced Documents:

- Land Use - 2023-12-07 Public Comments (with 23-1625)
- Land Use - 2023-12-07 Vegetated Roofs Changes (with 23-0791)
- Land Use - 2023-12-07 Amend Zoning Vegetated Roofs Red Lined (with 23-0791)