

## John Long

---

**From:** Himali P <himaliben@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 06, 2018 6:01 PM  
**To:** Board of Aldermen  
**Cc:** City Clerk Contact  
**Subject:** Transfer Fee: Questions, Concerns, and Comments

Hello everyone,

I have lived in Somerville (Ward 7) for the past 8 years and I have generally kept to myself when it comes to local politics. I detest politics but it is a necessary part of our society so I have chosen to become more involved. The proposed transfer fee is definitely **A solution that MIGHT resolve** the current housing issue. I cannot say I fully understand all the layers in our municipality but I will do my best to sum up what I have observed and I would truly appreciate any and all input you could share with me either as resources, experiences, and/or comparable successful initiatives in other cities.

Driving Factors:

**1. Lack of on Campus Housing @ Tufts** - With more and more students enrolling and with the school expanding, it seems that the influx annually drives prices up for rental properties. As I have understood the PILOT program, Tufts has the ability to purchase property under it's non-profit branch at a discounted rate and have that place the burden of property tax on the residents of Somerville & Medford.

- Would it not be appropriate to propose policy and agreements that hold Tufts more accountable for their taxes as well as the "in-kind" benefits it offers? (I am aware this would have to be a conversation with Tufts but I am attempting to be transparent about my views).

**2. Developers Flipping Property** - as we heard in the public hearing, the developers have certainly been going through the neighborhood converting homes into luxury condos. In the past 3 years, I have seen 9 homes converted which also drives up the nearby property value. That is just on my route from my home to Davis Sq. Economically, this too is exacerbating the affordable housing availability in our city.

- Is it not possible to fine any developer who converts an affordable housing unit into something like luxury condos by requiring a percentage of their profits for some length of time? Particularly, I believe **it would be appropriate to fine them to cover the costs per each unit of affordable housing lost or until they also develop replacement units.**
- Long time residents have advised me that there is currently a flat fee in place for property tax that should annually feed about \$1.5 million into the affordable housing trust. If the developers continue flipping property as frequently as they have then why not just hold them accountable to resolve an issue that their actions are making worse?

**3. Greenline Extension Benefits to Tufts** - As the city prepares to FINALLY extend the greenline, the benefits that will certainly provide homeowners increased value will also be provided to Tufts. I believe that there needs to be a change in the relationship with Tufts to put a payment plan in place to give back the amount owed to the city. They can provide a percentage of the profits they make on rental property for some length of time for each unit of affordable housing that has been lost within say the last 5 years, hypothetically, or until they build on campus housing for their students.

- As far as I am aware from previous conversations with neighbors Tufts has mentioned that requiring the students to look for their own housing is part of their education in which case I think they can have

more courses available and mentoring programs with neighbors to provide valuable knowledge as well as build a stronger community.

At the last meeting, I was also informed that there is a decrease in high school graduates from Somerville High and that the new high school project was on the ballot to help attract more families. If the end goal is to keep families in the area, I believe the 3 factors I laid out are the cause of that displacement and just as when putting out a fire, you aim for the base, we should be focusing on what is causing the issue in the first place (the root), develop a creative solution that won't burden the middle class, and have some preventive measures in place to better manage the city's struggles regarding lack of affordable housing.

I believe there are other options to be considered prior to taxing the middle class families that are struggling to get by. The lack of a diverse community presence at the last meeting should also tell you that while many are for this fee, those who have to work odd hours to put food on the table can't voice their concerns at hearings held during their normal working hours. This disproportionately affects those in the service industry that live off tips.

It is a disservice to the community to rush to a decision without the involvement of those who are truly at risk for displacement. I urge you to make a decision that the future community of Somerville won't regret.

**Preventive care to One Somerville is the best choice that has long term benefits to provide funds to the city without harming the middle class that drives our economy forward.**

I hope everyone has a lovely weekend and I look forward to our next meeting!

Always,

Himali Patel  
Renter, Registered Voter, Revolutionary.

## John Long

---

**From:** Coca <jacintaarena@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 06, 2018 6:25 PM  
**To:** City Clerk Contact  
**Subject:** Transfer fee tax ,( 1% )

To: Board of Aldermen

In a time of difficult days for families to survive , paying for the rent and dream to save money to afford a home, it became impossible to do it.

The increase of real estate it's astronomical.. It's a giant gap from the personal income and an affordable housing....

I was listening to the people that own homes in the Public hearing at City hall on Wednesday April 4 2018.....

Many of them explain how they have their homes , property from parents and grandparents.....They inherited from them...

By the time those relatives did afford to own those properties it was different market and salaries and properties don't have the same gap that is today.....it was an affordable issue.

No today...

The young couple can't afford a home because properties are forbidden with the same insane prices in a process to ensure only part of the society to be owners.....

People should have a way to own a home and the Legislators should look for a way to help this generation to become owners...

I support the Transfer fee tax ( 1% ) to be in a Fund for Affordable housing.

To help Somerville citizens to be home owners....

Jacinta Arena  
1374 Broadway  
Somerville 02144

## John Long

---

**From:** Katjana Ballantyne <Katjana@Katjana.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 06, 2018 10:05 PM  
**To:** John Long  
**Cc:** yogachef.rego@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Fwd: Opposition to the Transfer Tax  
**Attachments:** Dear Board of Aldermen.pdf

Dear John,

On the request of Kim would you please add this testimony to the official record....thank you, Katjana

-----

Just noticed my error in calling the activist group Our Generation. I am referring to Our Revolution.  
Kimberly Rego

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Opposition to the Transfer Tax  
Date: 2018-04-05 19:37  
From: Kimberly Rego <[yogachef.rego@gmail.com](mailto:yogachef.rego@gmail.com)>  
To: [boardofaldermen@somervillema.gov](mailto:boardofaldermen@somervillema.gov)

Dear Board of Aldermen,

I am emailing to submit my letter of opposition to the proposed transfer tax. I had submitted this letter previously, but it was not clear that my letter would be included in the record, as it preceded the public meeting. I apologize if it is a duplication.

I did attend the meeting on Wednesday and wanted to add a few thoughts on what I heard and saw. First, it was so unfortunate that there was so little importance given to informing the city homeowners. As the night wore on, it became clear that the public discourse was heavily slanted to the side of the "Our Generation" crew because they have in place a **political organization, with the objective of socializing the city** government at all costs. The private homeowners enjoy no such machine and it should surprise no one that their numbers were outpaced by the OG population. I would also like to say that I felt their conduct was not appropriate toward the end of the meeting, and their posturing should not earn them **any favors**.

My final thoughts are that there is no cohesive plan in place, which describes how the proposed taxes would be utilized or the funds maintained. In its current form, the BOA could come back and adjust the rate and the exemptions as they see fit without so much as a vote from those they would be effecting. Not only do I oppose this proposal, I suggest the BOA consider revising the city charter to remove this incredible over reach.

I am beyond disappointed in the way this issue was proposed and kept quiet, and feel betrayed by my representatives, who thought it would be

just fine to push this along in secret. A simple letter would have been so easily accomplished, which leaves me to understand that the absence of information was completely on purpose. Perhaps to try and get it through in front of the ever looming numbers we will see for the 2.5 over ride?

Disappointed,

Kimberly Rego

Dear Board of Aldermen,

I am writing to voice my frustration and extreme opposition to both the proposed transfer tax and the proposed tenants' right of first refusal. That our local government would even consider applying these non-tax deductible fees on the heels of a prop 2.5 override to fund an overdesigned high school, is incomprehensible to me.

I am a lifelong resident of Somerville and the only one of my contemporaries who was able to stay, due to the inflated cost of housing and poorly rated public schools. I have observed the ongoing boom of developers, supported in every way by local government, skirt their responsibility to provide a mandated amount of affordable housing. This "mistake" has come home to roost and we now have such a dearth of affordable housing, that there is a multi-year wait for new sliding scale and similar placements. Why on earth would you think its fair, to now tax the private homeowners to subsidize your mistakes? Especially since the revenue will not be sufficient to close the gap. I see this as a simple money grab, which will further decimate the existing middle class, further inflate housing cost, and still fail to meet the needs of a marginalized group the city government put in this position in the first place.

The "right of first refusal" proposal is the only thing I can think of more egregious than the aforementioned transfer tax. Both are merely veiled attempts at redistribution. I will stand firmly in opposition to anyone who takes the position of limiting my ability to sell private property to whom and when I wish. The proposal is an affront to existing law and I am ashamed to acknowledge it may be an ideal supported by the city in which I grew up.

I understand no vote is to be expected on either issue. This is unfortunate as they would surely fail.

Kimberly Rego  
23 Irvington Rd  
Somerville, Ma

## John Long

---

**From:** Paula Woolley <pwoolley117@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 11, 2018 1:33 PM  
**To:** Board of Aldermen; City Clerk Contact  
**Subject:** I support the Real Estate Transfer tax home rule petition

Hi,

I've been a home-owner in Somerville since 1997, and was a tenant-at-will in Somerville before that since 1982 in several apartments in owner-occupied houses. My husband and I bought our two-family house with another couple in 1997, and raised our two children here. We wouldn't be able to afford to buy or rent in the city now, and this was true even when my husband was still working (he was diagnosed with young-onset Alzheimer's in his early 50s, a few years ago). I'm very concerned with keeping the city affordable and diverse, which should include socio-economic diversity and efforts to keep families of every class in the city.

I have a few suggestions which I'll outline below:

1) Because of the great and adamant opposition to the transfer tax, I can see the need for some exemptions to keep people from protesting the tax. Even some of my neighbors who inherited their houses (plus have at least one rental unit) are against the tax, even though they didn't have to pay for their houses and are earning income from them! They would be exempt due to how long they've owned their property, though.

I think exemptions might not amount to much of a loss in relation to frequently flipped properties. For one thing, there are probably more condo units that get sold frequently after the owners have lived there for only a few years than there would be property owners who qualify for long-term exemptions. (In other words, the same flipped condo would be generating 1% transfer tax every few years versus the houses that aren't sold until after the owners have lived there for 30 to 50 years, or are left to the owners' beneficiaries after they die.)

2) If there ARE such exemptions, maybe some kind of mechanism could be put in place making it easy for people eligible for the exemption to make an optional donation to the city for affordable housing when they sell their houses. This would be like adding a scholarship donation check-off box on a tax form, and could suggest a 1% donation. If there's no sales-related document that this donation option could be added to, perhaps it could be included as a flyer in each quarter's tax bill, outlining the affordable housing priorities that the donation would be applied toward.

3) On a different note, I also wondered if there could be a home rule petition to raise the condo conversion fee amount? The last time I looked into it, the fee was \$500. However, at the time I did my research, I believe San Francisco had a **condo conversion fee of something like \$20,000. Raising the fee (or maybe assessing the fee per unit converted) might not deter developers, but it could be another source of revenue for affordable housing.**

Thank you for your time.

Paula Woolley  
117 Hudson St. #2  
Somerville 02144

**John Long**

---

**From:** Jack Mason <jack.mason1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 11, 2018 10:04 PM  
**To:** City Clerk Contact  
**Subject:** Notification on Intent To Tax Home Owners

Dear Aldermen, Alderwomen and Alderpersons,

Please notify all home owners of your intent to apply a sales tax to their property. Regardless of who you think will pay or not pay your sales tax, it will negatively impact property values in Somerville, and likely dampen the housing market here significantly.

Know that if you get away with robing us homeowners of our properties valuea, you will likely be held accountable when the Somerville real estate bubble burst, even if your tax is only part of the reason.

You are trying to help folk that make up to 150% of the Boston median income of \$110K, so folks under \$161K. The median income of Somerville Home Owner households is \$66K. Do you really expect us to let you do a reverse Robin Hood on us?

I've ben here in Somerville my whole life. 57 years now, and I've never seen such a crooked bunch of pretend do gooders. Stop this insanity and come to your senses.

Please tell the Mayor to spare us his Christmas cards this year so he can afford a mailing to property owners. We must have a right to be informed by mail of our public screwing. We'll deserve at least a chance to bend over. Check with legal, they'll know.

Jack Mason