



# CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

## CLERK OF COMMITTEES

February 14, 2018

### REPORT OF THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Ben Ewen-Campen	Chair	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Vice Chair	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven Alderman	Present	

Others present: Alderman Wil Mbah, Alderman Stephanie Hirsch, Alderman Mark Niedergang, Michael Glavin - OSPCD, Brad Rawson - OSPCD, Alan Inacio - OSPCD, Tom Galigani - OSPCD, Hannah Carrillo - Sustainable Neighborhood Coordinator, Tim Snyder - Mayor's Office, Charles Sillari - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:38 PM by Chairman Ewen-Campen and adjourned at 9:25 PM.

#### **Approval of the November 29, 2017 Minutes**

Item #203222 of the minutes was amended at the Board of Aldermen's meeting of February 22, 2018 as follows:

Ms. Rubel told the committee that there are no updates for Somerville as the project has been happening in Medford. Mr. Chahad, a director of real estate at Tufts, distributed a map of where the project is taking place and also entered a letter dated June 19, 2017 into the record. He said there have only been 2 dorms built on campus since 1980 and that Tufts is trying to add 600 beds in the next 5 years. There are underutilized houses being used by Tufts as office space and faculty housing. The real estate is owned by Walnut Hill which is a 501(c)(3). He went on to discuss the Medford project saying that the permitting process and neighborhood meeting being done now. Landlords are concerns about Tufts taking away a piece of their market share. The housing will be apartments and not dorms, with only one student per bedroom and there will be no parking except for handicapped drop off. The plan is to have preliminary discussions with Somerville in late summer/early fall of 2018. Chairman Niedergang said that he would prefer not having community meetings during the summer months.

Alderman Ballantyne advocated against expansion into the neighborhood by a) evicting families, seniors and faculty from their housing, and b) converting stick framed wooden buildings from office use to undergraduate housing. Tuft University has never communicated to the Ward Alderman about their expansion plans. This village housing concept is in direct conflict with what the community said it needed. It is also another example neighborhoods/people not being

advised, as the information was discovered through the Tufts Daily. Tuft University's ad hoc housing plan was sprung upon the community and is counter to what everyone in the community has been working for and ignores our city's strategic plan goals as outlined in SomerVision. Alderman Ballantyne explained that there is a university zone and Tufts isn't increasing the density within that zone, but rather using a suburban sprawl design approach instead of remembering we are in an urban area. Tufts is supporting religious institutions that serve Tufts to take buildings off the tax role. It makes families leave their homes and is in direct conflict with SomerVision. Mr. Chahad stated that there will be no evictions and that people will be relocated. He told the committee that the affected area in Somerville doesn't go to Powder House Blvd. or Teele Avenue.

27 residents attended the meeting who were against the "Village concept." Members of the public were sponsored to speak by Alderman Ballantyne. Among the concerns expressed were:

- The impact on the neighborhood school,
- Opposition to a transient group moving into the neighborhoods,
- The current housing crisis in the city,
- The character of the neighborhood being negatively impacted,
- A preference for Tufts to add dorm beds to the current campus,
- The expansion plan is unsustainable,
- The plan will harm relationships between Tufts and the neighborhoods,

Ms. Rubel said more students are living in Medford rather than Somerville because of price and that Tufts can't afford to build a new dorm on campus now. Mr. Chahad acknowledged a housing shortage at Tufts and said everyone is working hard to provide more housing for students.

**RESULT:**

**ACCEPTED AS AMENDED**

**203981: That the Director of SPCD develop a Memorial Bench Program for public parks, the Community Path and other public property, and report back to this Board by October 12, 2017.**

See item 205127

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**205127: Director of SPCD responding to #203981 re: a memorial bench donation program.**

Mr. Rawson discussed the newly developed process of applying for memorial trees and benches, maintenance for memorials and explained that when planting trees near the bike path, consideration must be given to the subway beneath it and drainage issues. The city has drafted the Application Sheets for the program and will modify them to clarify a few concerns. Mr. Rawson will be the city's point person for memorial benches and he explained the design process, location selection and application and payment deadlines. He noted that there is no limit to the number of memorials per year.

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**204321: That the Administration create a Pedestrian Safety Committee. (2nd request)**

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**205100: That the Administration appear before this Board to discuss a possible Transit and Pedestrian Advisory Group.**

The committee was told that residents have expressed interest in serving on this advisory group, which would be aimed at promoting walkability for seniors, children and all residents. The question was raised of whether an official Committee should be formed, analogous to the Bicycle Committee, or whether it should remain a community organization. Chairman Ewen-Campen said this group is a top priority and stressed that city permission is not necessary for anyone to form a community organization. Mr. Rawson spoke about staff capacity and resources, adding that he is happy to see people involved with regional groups. Alderman Hirsch is hoping to work on this project and invited those who are interested to participate, adding that this could be a resident driven process so it doesn't take up too many city resources. Alderman Niedergang referenced his time on the bicycle committee and said that he believes a city committee is the way to go and he doesn't think pedestrian and public transit committees should be combined.

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**205128: Director of SPCD conveying an overview and summary of the 5-Year HUD Plan process.**

Mr. Inacio discussed the 5-year plan and said that there is a re-evaluation of priorities and needs. A draft of the plan will be submitted to the BOA on 4/18/18 and on 5/24/18, the BOA will be asked for its acceptance with the expectation that the plan be accepted prior to the FY-19 budget deliberations. He went on to discuss various grants and the way funds may be used and pointed out that Somerville is an entitlement community. Chairman Ewen-Campen requested that copies of the last plan be emailed to the committee members.

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**204851: That the Administration update this Board on its efforts to form an Office of Housing Stability, as recommended by the Sustainable Neighborhoods Working Group and mentioned in the Mayor's recent inaugural address.**

Mr. Glavin said that this is a shared concern with the city of Boston and he explained the city's housing initiative and needs in a changing world. Ms. Carrillo told the committee that people are in crisis when they visit her office. The committee discussed position qualifications, outreach efforts and notifying tenants of their rights. The city will work with other cities and organizations to accomplish the goals.

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**204854: That the Chief Assessor report to this Board, the number of properties (residential and commercial) that have been bought and sold within a 1-year period, and the extent of improvements that were made during that period, for the past five years.**

Chairman Ewen-Campen commented on various opinions of what should, or should not, be penalized. He believes that many houses are being purchased and sold as condos and went on record saying that people flipping homes for high profits without putting in improvements should be taxed heavily. The information that was requested in this item is difficult to compile but the Assessor's Office will be working on this project and the data will be shared when completed. The data will show the names of the owners and whether the properties are owner occupied. Mr. Snyder said the data requested will take time to build and that once he has more information he will come before the committee. There are approximately 31,000 residential properties in the city and the committee discussed various ways to compile property information from various departments in the city.

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**204862: That the Director of SPCD appear before this Board to discuss the timeline for repaving Broadway, between Central Street and the McGrath Highway.**

Mr. Snyder discussed the 5-year paving plan and noted that some streets deteriorate faster than others.

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**204868: That the Director of SPCD provide an update on the progress made on all recommendations included in the December 2015 Sustainable Neighborhood Working Group report.**

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**200700: That the Director of SPCD report to this Board on the plan and timeline for implementing the recommendations in the recent report of the Sustainable Neighborhoods Working Group.**

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**204863: That the Administration update this Board on the former Winter Hill Star Market and the associated lawsuit, as requested in #201772.**

Mr. Snyder discussed the 5-year paving plan and noted that some streets deteriorate faster than others.

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**204884: That this Board explore establishing a community-based independent Community Land Trust that can purchase property in conjunction with non-profit organizations and private citizens, and make housing permanently affordable.**

Alderman Scott explained that a community land trust is a non-profit that holds properties to make them permanently affordable. He spoke about the diverse forms of existing land trusts around the country, saying that there are many types in rural and urban areas and he mentioned municipalities that have invested their pension funds in them. The community land trust would purchase the land beneath the house and an individual(s) would purchase the structure. A re-sale formula would be used to keep the property affordable. Alderman Scott wants to find a way to have private citizens get involved in this resident driven option and believes that it is a well-suited idea for Somerville because it fills a gap and allows people to bring properties to the city. He told the committee that there is a Federal National Mortgage Association, (Fannie Mae), checklist that guides people through the process and that he believes this concept and the proposed tenant's right of first refusal are very powerful together. He would like to see a task force formed to work on this issue. Alderman Hirsch mentioned the city's ability to issue bonds to invest in a community land trust and Mr. Snyder said the city must be cautious about certain legal issues. Chairman Ewen-Campen and Alderman Scott raised the question of whether a task force should be convened by the Board of Aldermen to develop the idea further and spoke in favor of doing so.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**204885: That the City Clerk and the Director of SPCD expand abutter notices for Zoning Board of Appeal, Planning Board and Historic Preservation Commission hearings to include tenants of abutting properties in addition to property owners.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**203563: That the Director of SPCD provide bi-annual progress reports on Assembly Square, Gilman Square, Lowell Street, Winter Hill, and future planned neighborhoods as they are completed.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**196221: That the Director of SPCD provide SomerVision updates twice a year, broken down by ward, showing progress made in residential, affordable units, jobs, public space, trips via transit, bike and walking, and development in transformative areas.**

Mr. Glavin informed the committee that OSPCD has compiled 5 years of data and will begin to perform a trend analysis. Alderman Ballantyne commented that the city is behind in the proposed goal of housing in transformational areas. The committee discussed the nature of the open space the city is gaining and Chairman Ewen-Campen requested information on the size of the open spaces and a break out of green space vs. sidewalks on the next spreadsheet.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**202308: That the Director SPCD request a redesign and upgrade to the asphalt playground, tot lot and “cave” courtyard at the West Somerville Neighborhood School.**

**RESULT: WORK COMPLETED**

**203479: That the Administration update the Ward 6 Alderman on plans to improve way-finding for the Community Path through Davis Square.**

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**204847: That the Director of SPCD update this Board on what is being done to preserve minority owned businesses in the city.**

Mr. Galligani informed the committee that the information is being prepared by OSPCD staff and that a presentation will be made at a future meeting. Alderman Mbah is concerned about affordable retail space and he wants to develop policies to deal with this situation. He requested the following information: business owner race and demographics by ward, any policies regarding minority businesses, which businesses own and which rent, and a new definition for “affordable retail”. Mr. Galligani said racial data doesn’t exist at the city level now.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**204848: That the Superintendent of Schools provide this Board with information regarding homelessness among the student population, including the demographics of those affected and what steps are being taken to prevent those at risk from becoming homeless.**

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**204969: That the Director of SPCD explain why the process of applying for affordable housing hasn't been consolidated into a single, universal, persistent application, lottery, and wait list.**

See item 204990.

**RESULT: WORK COMPLETED**

**204990: That the Director of SPCD update this Board on the Affordable Housing Universal Wait List plan and consolidating the process of applying for affordable housing into a single, universal, persistent application, lottery, and wait list.**

Mr. Glavin explained that despite work from his department, this has not been achieved, and remains a stubbornly difficult task. He expressed hope that the proposed Office of Housing Stability could have the capacity and expertise to develop such a waiting list. He discussed current ways to direct people towards the programs that help them most, and Chairman Ewen-Campen and Alderman Mbah expressed their concern about confusing this pressing issue.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**Handouts:**

- CLT Chart (with 204884)
- Progress Report (with 196221)