



HOUSING COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 **2:00 PM** **Remote Meeting**

The Housing Committee will hold a public hearing on July 17, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. to continue the discussion on allowing multifamily housing in all neighborhoods of the City.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Housing Committee was held on Wednesday, July 17, 2024. The meeting was Called to Order at 2:00 p.m. by the Co-Chair, Councillor Azeem. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, this public meeting was remote only.

At the request of the Co-Chair, Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.

- Councillor Azeem – Present
- Councillor Siddiqui – Present
- Vice Mayor McGovern – Present
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present
- Councillor Wilson – Present

Present – 5. Quorum established.

The Co-Chair, Councillor Azeem offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to continue the discussion on allowing multifamily housing in all neighborhoods of the City. Present at the meeting was Yi-An Huang, City Manager, Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development, Chris Cotter, Housing Director, and Melissa Peters, Director of Community and Strategic Planning. Also present at the meeting was Mayor Simmons and Councillor Nolan.

Due to technical difficulties, the Committee went into a five-minute recess.

The Co-Chair, Councillor Azeem recognized the team from the Community Development Department (CDD) who gave a presentation titled “Multifamily Housing Citywide”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation offered information on zoning principles, proposed zoning concept, height and density, open space and setbacks, design/development review, and process timeline.

Co-Chair Azeem opened Public Comment.

Carolyn Magid, 71 Reed Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments regarding housing for low-income residents.

Helen Walker, 43 Linnaean Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments on housing, zoning changes, and effects from demographic changes.

Sierra Dearn, 7 Temple Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments and concerns regarding changes to zoning and spoke in favor of affordable housing.

Henry H. Wortis, 106 Berkshire Street, Cambridge, MA, offered suggestions towards affordable housing and shared concerns about the proposed language.

Dan Totten, 54 Bishop Allen Drive, Cambridge, MA, shared support for affordable housing and offered concerns about the proposed language.

Lee Farris, 269 Norfolk Street, Cambridge, MA, shared concerns about the proposed language.

Heather Hoffman, 213 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments that were not in favor of the proposed language.

Co-Chair Azeem recognized Co-Chair Siddiqui who made a motion to close public comment.

Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.

Co-Chair Azeem thanked CDD for their presentation and thanked Co-Chair Siddiqui for all her hard work. Co-Chair Azeem noted the progress that has been made through the many conversations that have occurred in Committee and community meetings and shared that the presentation and slides are a good reflection of the work that has been done so far. Co-Chair Azeem shared his excitement for continuing to move forward.

Co-Chair Azeem recognized Co-Chair Siddiqui who shared that she appreciated the feedback that has been received and that having these meetings is an opportunity to discuss concerns that are raised by members of the public. Councillor Siddiqui stressed that having affordable housing in the City is really important and how the City produces that housing is even more important.

Co-Chair Azeem recognized City Manager Huang who recognized the challenges that are faced when trying to develop more affordable housing. The City Manager shared his appreciation for the work that is being done by the team from CDD and the initiative the Housing Co-Chairs are taking to help the City continue to move forward. City Manager Huang highlighted and provided examples of the inclusionary and affordable housing developments that have occurred over the last ten years and shared that continuing to provide more housing in Cambridge is something that is supported by City leadership and staff.

Co-Chair Azeem recognized Councillor Wilson who thanked City staff for continuing to provide more information on the direction the City is going in relation to zoning and the possibilities that

come with zoning changes. Councillor Wilson also thanked those who spoke in public comment and raised necessary concerns that should be addressed as the discussion continues to go forward regarding the housing crisis not just in Cambridge, but nationally. Councillor Wilson noted the importance of looking at goals and some of the unintended consequences that could arise. Councillor Wilson asked the team from CDD if they had an idea of what the potential number of units could be available with the zoning as written versus focusing on getting more inclusionary units. Jeff Roberts responded by noting that the focus right now is to set regulations for housing through zoning, not necessarily what is going to be built. They shared the importance of looking at economic effects and trends. Councillor Wilson asked how housing vouchers and zoning language could work together to help with affordable and inclusionary housing. Co-Chair Azeem responded by sharing there are no plans to change how inclusionary housing works. Chris Cotter provided a brief update on the discussions regarding voucher programs and shared that it is being looked at separately from zoning.

Co-Chair Azeem recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who offered comments on the dimensional proposal standards, open space and setbacks, current and future zoning, and economic conditions and development trends. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler had a question regarding the inclusionary bonus density requirements and asked if City staff could provide more information on it. Jeff Roberts responded by sharing how the changes in zoning would create a different approach while also supporting interest in development. Jeff Roberts noted that this type of change would be most effective where there are larger lot sizes. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler pointed out how it may create more inclusionary units to be available.

Co-Chair Azeem recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who thanked the Housing Co-Chairs and CDD for their hard work and acknowledged how complex this discussion is and has been. The Vice Mayor asked for clarification on how many stories would be able to be built. Jeff Roberts explained how the height limits would vary based on specific districts. The Vice Mayor suggested the proposed language around height limits be clearer. Vice Mayor McGovern shared the importance of having continuous conversations with affordable housing partners so as not to hurt the Affordable Housing Overlay as well as continuing to have conversations with community members. The Vice Mayor stressed how important it is to continue to have developers build inclusionary housing and how adding additional housing to help low, moderate, and middle-income people will have positive results. Co-Chair Siddiqui added that the Housing Co-Chairs would work with CDD on some of the questions that arose in the meeting, and that a date for another committee meeting would be set next month.

Co-Chair Azeem recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Absent

Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent - 1. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:06p.m.

Attachment A – The City Clerk’s Office received five written communications.

Clerk's Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/789?view_id=1&redirect=true

I. Discussion

A communication was received from Jeffrey Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development, Community Development Department, transmitting a presentation titled "Multifamily Housing Citywide".

7/17/2024

Attachment A

Erwin, Nicole

From: Henry Wortis <hhhavelock@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2024 4:24 PM
To: Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Burhan Azeem; City Clerk; sumbulidd@gmail.com; Patty Nolan; ayesha@voteayesha.com
Subject: Exclusionary zoning

Dear Councillors,

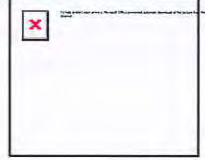
If we rezone to increase housing density, we should do it in a manner that increases the amount of housing for low- and moderate-income residents and not increase market-rate housing that only the wealthy can afford. The proposal before you fails to require that outcome. Instead, it could increase the proportion of market-rate to modest-income housing.

Therefore, before you vote on this proposal, please have the City Manager prepare two studies for your consideration. First, a study of the likely effect of the current zoning petition on the ability of Cambridge to provide housing for those in the 0-30%, 30-50%, and 50-80% area median income brackets. (Please do not rest on the false claim that inclusionary housing meets the needs of the people in these brackets.) Second, a study of the effects of similar rezoning in cities like Cambridge with a high demand for housing and a history of price inflexibility.

Without the knowledge from these studies, you are at risk of rezoning based on the unsupported claim that it will increase housing affordability. For instance, If similar rezoning has failed to substantially increase housing affordability elsewhere, there is no justification for adopting the same policies here.

Thank you,
Henry H Wortis

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 Henry H. Wortis
 106 Berkshire St.
 Cambridge MA 02141
 617-733-0952



Erwin, Nicole

From: Carolyn Magid <cmagid@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2024 3:45 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk; City Manager
Subject: Comments in public comment at Housing Committee 7/17--multi-family housing

Dear Councillors, Mayor, Vice Mayor,

These were my comments from public comment at the Housing Committee today.

First, I want to comment on the fact that there was a "Zoom" problem that meant that some of us who are following these issues very closely joined only after the presentation was well underway and couldn't see the presentation or Councillors/City staff. (I don't think it was a problem with Zoom, because in the 20+ minutes I waited to get in, I tested Zoom by setting up my own meeting, which worked fine.) These are public meetings for a reason. I don't think it is good enough to go ahead without the public, and then have people join late and on audio only.

I have read the CDD report and have several concerns:

First, The charge of this committee included **“a goal of having viable housing for everyone especially lower-income residents” (Charter right 2 3/25).**

Where is the **evidence** in this report that the proposed zoning changes will provide viable housing for low-income residents? Clearly the hope is that more inclusionary housing will be built.

- But isn't it possible that developers will instead build 9 units of market housing on many sites? (What evidence is there that this won't be the predominant outcome?)
- The report itself questions whether without a density bonus, inclusionary units will be built.
- Inclusionary housing requires vouchers to help low-income people. It is great that a significant number of current inclusionary tenants have vouchers, but there are still 6000 people who live or work in Cambridge waiting for vouchers. Where are the vouchers for these people for new inclusionary projects?

Second, as we learned from the movement for racial justice, there is a difference between equity and equality. We can't assume that it is equitable to have zoning that may **cause development-driven displacement** in the Port and Cambridgeport. Yes it is going on now, but don't make it worse by making it even easier to build market-rate housing in these neighborhoods than it is now. If changes to base zoning are made,

they should be based on a principle to **shift development pressure away from C1 districts**. This could entail raising densities in all districts but C1, above what is currently allowed in C1.

Finally, the Council asked that the **development** of this zoning include residents. Is this happening or planned to happen? How were or will the residents be selected? Will the public know who is engaging on their behalf?

(I see that CDD plans public meetings after the zoning is written, but I believe that the intention was to have residents involved in zoning development.)

I hope we can get these things right and have zoning that provides viable housing for and doesn't displace low-income residents.

Carolyn Magid
71 Reed St.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Jana Odette <jodette@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2024 2:05 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Housing Committee Meeting (which I am unable to attend, for technical reasons!)

Dear Honorable Councillors:

My understanding is that Cambridge is already one of the smallest, most dense cities in the United States, and that the proposed 6-stories, anywhere, WITHOUT review is extremely radical with regards to other housing proposals country-wide.

The data again and again seems to come up that this is a give-away to developers. WHY no review so that trees, green space, quality of life, *enough water resources to go around*, are not examined?

Thank you.

Jana Odette

Erwin, Nicole

From: Matthew Schreiner <matschr@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2024 12:48 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk; chjc@cambridgehousingjustice.com
Subject: Multi-family Zoning Hearing

Dear Council,

as someone now living on Social Security, I want to be sure changes to zoning don't end up replacing current alder affordable apartments. I don't want to see existing smaller buildings with reasonable rent replaced by larger ones with between 0 and 20% "affordable" units, particularly, if they're only available to people with income above 50% of AMI. Other than that I understand the need for greater density.

Matthew Schreiner
26 Grozier Rd.

Erwin, Nicole

From: nonie valentine <nonie.valentine1@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 16, 2024 6:54 PM
To: Wilson, Ayesha; Azeem, Burhan; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; McGovern, Marc
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Multi-family housing Cambridge

Dear Councillors,

I write to oppose the prospect of 6-story buildings anywhere in the city, without review. We need affordable housing but we also need thoughtful development planning with a determined percentage of growth over a determined period of time, rather than a carte blanche to simply build. This proposal is deeply out of proportion in Cambridge, one of the densest small cities in the country. And does not take into account either infrastructural needs or quality of life: water resources, schools, green space, or trees.

I don't believe upzoning like this would stimulate housing (building is pricy now), rather increase land values, making housing development further out of reach, as well as increase gentrification.

6-story buildings would be acceptable in corridors and squares, not in most neighborhoods. The proposal strikes me as open season to tear down any historic property that a developer could find and systematically undermine the beauty and history of the city. This is discussed as the concern of the well-to-do when in fact our beauty and history provide something less able to be articulated but essential for all of us.

This proposal would be a mistake.

Sincerely,

Nonie Valentine