



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY**  
**DEVELOPMENT**  
**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE**  
**MAYOR**

*PLANNING DIVISION*

**STAFF PRESENT:**

CHRISTOPHER DI IORIO, *PLANNER/ZONING ADMINISTRATOR*  
LORI MASSA, *PLANNER/ZONING ADMINISTRATOR*

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

ELIZABETH MORONEY  
MICHAEL A. CAPUANO, ESQ  
JOSEPH FAVALORO  
JAMES KIRYLO  
DANA LEWINTER, ALT.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

KEVIN PRIOR, *CHAIRMAN*

**PLANNING BOARD MINUTES**

The Somerville Planning Board will hold a public meeting on **Thursday, November 19, 2009** at **6:00 p.m.** at the Visiting Nurses Association, 259 Lowell Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Community Room, Somerville, MA.

**Amendment to Broadway in East Somerville (Case #PB2009-10)**

An ordinance amending the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to modify the Corridor Commercial District (CCD) and Transit Oriented Districts (TOD) in Article 6 "Establishment of Zoning Districts", Article 8 "Dimensional Requirements", and Article 9 "Parking Requirements" and map those districts and residential districts in specified areas on or near Broadway in Winter Hill and East Somerville.

The area of the map change proposal is generally located along the Broadway corridor from Dartmouth Street to the Somerville/Boston border.

***FORMAT OF REPORTS***

*The amendments have been discussed at length in a prior staff report. A staff report describing the amendments in detail was submitted to your honorable board on September 10, 2009, with the initial version of the proposed amendments. A follow up memo was submitted to the Board of Aldermen Land Use Committee and Planning Board on November 5, 2009 with updates and modifications.*

*For their meeting on November 19, 2009, staff submitted a report to the Planning Board (see Attachment I). The report contained a summary of the spoken testimony, as well as staff responses, and recommended a few amendments to the originally submitted proposal (see Attachment II). Please note - the Planning Board did not receive written testimony before the deadline.*



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*This report from the Planning Board to the Board of Aldermen will focus on discussion at the November 19, 2009, meeting of the Planning Board and its final recommendation. For your reference a “clean” copy of the proposed rezoning ordinance, as recommended by the Planning Board, is also attached to this report (see Attachment III).*

#### **PLANNING BOARD DISCUSSION**

*There was discussion among board members about topics including:*

##### ***Streetscape Project***

*Joseph Favaloro asked if the streetscape project is part of the vote and if it is related to the zoning proposal. In response, Staff indicated that the streetscape project is not part of the vote. It has been an ongoing process for four years and is fully funded. Construction should begin in 2010. The project enhances the zoning by adding space in the right-of-way for outdoor displays or dining and creating a pedestrian oriented street. Private property would not be impacted by the streetscape project, instead the zoning would regulate what occurs on private property. Favaloro would like to see the traffic counts that supported the streetscape project. He fears that Broadway will become a parking lot. IKEA’s impact on the traffic is still unclear.*

*James Kirylo has concerns with the proposed street design between McGrath and Sullivan Square. He still needs to be convinced that the reduction in lanes will work.*

*Elizabeth Moroney is in favor of the proposal. She was stuck in traffic on Broadway until lower Broadway where there was no traffic. The Stop and Shop development gives her comfort in the traffic engineers projections. The same traffic engineer that worked on the Stop and Shop development is working on IKEA. Everyone said that the traffic around Stop and Shop would be horrible but there is not any traffic.*

*Staff stated that MassHighway has reviewed the data to support the reduction in lanes and approved of the streetscape plan. The traffic analysis on Broadway included projected traffic to IKEA. We do not want Broadway to be a back road to IKEA. Broadway will be a destination and not a throughway. The first six months of IKEA opening will be crazy with people figuring out how to get there. Three years after opening IKEA stores, the customer base settles to its regular pace. Sullivan Square causes traffic to back-up into Somerville; however, Boston will be constructing a street grid in place of the rotary to reduce congestion. Also, the Winter Hill lights are not timed properly causing back-ups. The City is entering into a contract with MIT to analyze the timing of lights.*

##### ***Height of Buildings***

*Michael Capuano stated concerns about the proposed height along Broadway. He finds that the Great Streets concept is a nice idea for Union Square but not along Broadway where neighborhoods are closer to business districts. He is comfortable with the current scale along Broadway. Taller buildings will add density, of which he is not in support.*

*Dana LeWinter finds that five stories is an appropriate scale and not all of the buildings will be built to the maximum height. Creating a streetwall and a walkable community is key. Even if people drive to the area, they will park and walk as opposed to driving to each destination on Broadway.*

*James Kirylo is not concerned with the 55 foot height and does not anticipate that all buildings will be this tall.*

*Elizabeth Moroney stated that the height limit is already 50 feet so a 5 foot difference would not be noticeable. Also, not all of the buildings would reach the maximum height.*



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*Staff responded that Broadway is not Union Square and when creating the zoning districts in Union Square we were always thinking of how they could apply to other areas of the City. We have added additional setbacks to residential districts and other dimensional controls to specifically address Broadway. All of the proposed forms are familiar to Somerville. There are many buildings along Highland Ave that are at least 55 feet and Highland Ave is a much narrower street. Not all of the buildings would be 55 feet tall because some of the lots are shallow.*

#### **Parking**

*Dana LeWinter would like to get more details on how the payment in lieu of parking would work.*

#### **Vision for the Area**

*Dana LeWinter stated that Winter Hill needs revitalization and the rezoning will encourage investment.*

*Elizabeth Moroney stated that the area needs to be developed. There has been no development for many years and other parts of the City have grown. Other cities are attracting business and we need to do the same. This creates a true vision for the City.*

*Michael Capuano thinks that the stores closing down are a result of the state of the economy, not a result of lack of customers or disinvestment. He asked why the zoning should change if people would need to come through the Boards anyway, having nonconforming properties.*

*Staff stated that the Business A district is auto focused; the purpose statement states that it is anticipated that most users will arrive by motor vehicle. Also, the current zoning includes suburban parking requirements. There are many changes happening in the area and there will be competitors for the businesses on Broadway. Having apartments above businesses creates a built-in customer base.*

#### **PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATION**

*Following discussion, the Elizabeth Moroney made a motion to approve the proposed amendments, as amended by the Staff report of November 13, 2009. James Kirylo seconded the motion, which carried 3-2, with Kevin Prior absent.*

*The Planning Board recommends APPROVAL of the attached zoning amendment.*

#### **Review of Continued Cases for the Zoning Board of Appeals:**

**369-371 Beacon St (ZBA #2008-61)** Applicant Beacon Street Hotel & Owner George Makrigiannis seek a special permit with Site Plan Review (SZO §7.11.10.5.b) in order to construct and establish a hotel of more than 10,000 gross sq.ft. BA zone. Ward 2.

*The Applicant requested a continuance to December 3, 2009.*

**9-11 Harvard Pl (ZBA #2009-04)** Applicant & Owner Elaine Thibault seeks a Special Permit with Site Plan Review approval under SZO §7.2 to construct two principal structures on the same lot and under §7.3 to develop four (4) residential units, where 12.5% are affordable housing. RA zone. Ward 3.



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*The Applicant requested a continuance to December 3, 2009.*

**Review of Continued Cases for the Zoning Board of Appeals:**

**38 Gorham St: (ZBA #2009-49)** Applicant & Owner Daniel O'Rourke proposes to convert a two-family into a three-family dwelling and seeks a variance (SZO §5.5) for lot area per dwelling unit. The Applicant also seeks a special permit (§4.4.1 & 5.1) for the alteration of a non-conforming structure in order to construct a dormer and deck within the required side yard. RB zone. Ward 7.

*Planning staff explained the proposal. Dan O'Rourke has been living in the house since 1995. He was renting the apartment and has now purchased the house. There was no testimony for or against the project. The Board stated they do not have a problem with the dormer and deck but the parking is their concern and they feel it doesn't meet the criteria for a variance. Elizabeth Moroney made a motion to continue the application to December 3, 2009. James Kirlyo seconded the motion. Upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously 4-0.*

**Other Business:**

The link between planning and public health.

*The Board discussed opportunities to apply for \$3 million grant for Shape up Somerville. Director of Public Health coming to the next meeting if Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals and Board of Health accept it, it will be helpful with grant application.*

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Plans and reports are available at the City of Somerville website at the following link:

[www.somervillema.gov/planningandzoning](http://www.somervillema.gov/planningandzoning)

A recording of this meeting may be obtained in the Planning Division.



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