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December 7, 2006

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON LAND USE
MEETING IN JOINT SESSION WITH THE PLANNING BOARD

The Committee on Land Use met in Joint Session with the Planning Board on December 7, 2006, with Chairman William White presiding and Committee Members Aldermen Sean O'Donovan and Thomas Taylor also present and voting. Also present were Aldermen Rebekah Gewirtz and Walter Pero, James Kostaras from SPCD and members of the Planning Board.

The committee held a Public Hearing regarding an amendment establishing a PUD-C Zoning Overlay District and Union Square Arts Overlay District with Facilitation by City-Wide Amendments. Mr. Kostaras gave a brief overview of the proposal and told the members that the proposal is citywide, and not just for Union Square. He told the members that a neighborhood revitalization strategy would include transportation, housing and master plans. He stated that several neighborhood meetings were held to help in developing the zoning, which he sees as a legal planning tool for the community, and that this proposal is an effort to bring the Green Line to Union Square. Mr. Kostaras said that the first step would be to develop main streets for transit. Union Square was the center of transit in the 1950's and 1960's and the city believes that it should be restored to its prior high density and envisions it as an artist community with mixed-use development. The city also would like to develop Union Square as a PUD-C overlay district and allow buildings as high as 12 stories. The PUD-C would be subject to the review process and need to meet Design Review Committee standards. The goals are to create a vibrant neighborhood business district that incorporates the arts and provides housing to allow for a diverse community, to preserve the historic architecture of the square, to transform the square into a model transit oriented development district with an urban design. The process, going forward, is to undertake studies and to perform a design review.

Residents speaking in favor of new development and emphasized the need for high density and asked that the city hold firm to its commitment. They also spoke about incentives for developers and about affordable housing. Some residents expressed concern for open space and an adverse impact on the neighborhoods.

The committee requested that Mr. Kostaras provide the following information within 2 weeks:

- A consideration of reducing the number of stories from 12 to 8,
- A consideration to shrink the Arts Overlay District,
- An explanation of the rationale for locating the MBTA stop around the Fitchburg Line, and

- An opinion of what 15% of affordable housing would do to the proposal.

The committee discussed matters before it and took action on the following 3 items:

181780: Ordinance - By Ald. Heuston and Taylor, Amending the Code of Ordinances by establishing a PUD-C zoning Overlay District and an Arts Overlay District for Union Sq.

RECOMMENDATION: Should be placed on file (Superceeded by # 182003)

VOTE: Unanimous, 4 - 0 in favor

181885: Ordinance - By Ald. Taylor, Proposing an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to increase side yard setbacks in RA and RB Districts.

RECOMMENDATION: Should be approved

VOTE: Unanimous, 4 - 0 in favor

182330: Communication from Planning Board - Submitting its recommendations on the proposed amendment of Article 8 of the Zoning Ordinance, regarding RA and RB setbacks.

RECOMMENDATION: Should be placed on file (Copy to all Aldermen)

VOTE: Unanimous, 4 - 0 in favor

Alderman William A. White, Jr., Chairman
Committee on Land Use

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Committee on Land Use
meeting in Joint Session with the Planning
Board, December 7, 2006

In Board of Aldermen

Clerk