



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Land Use Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 3, 2026

6:30 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Ewen-Campen at 6:34 pm and adjourned at 7:42 pm on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Davis, Clingan, Sait, McLaughlin and Ewen-Campen), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

Others present: Samantha Carr - Land Use Analyst, Katherine Wiese - Economic Development Planner, Fiona DiMartino - Planning Division Deputy Director and Delaney Fisher-Cassiol - Clerk of Committees

Roll Call

Present: Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis, Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan, Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait, Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin and Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen

1. Committee Minutes
(ID # [26-0942](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Land Use Committee Meeting of May 21, 2026.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, Ward Five City Councilor Sait, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

2. Committee Minutes
(ID # [26-1147](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Land Use Committee Meeting of June 18, 2026.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, Ward Five City Councilor Sait, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

3. Mayor's Request
(ID # [26-0746](#))

Requesting approval of the Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Financing (UCH-TIF) Zone, Plan, and Form of Agreement for Assembly Square and East Somerville.

Economic Development Planner Katherine Wiese explained that creating this proposed district, covering parts of East Somerville and Assembly Square, allows projects to request Urban Center Housing Tax Increment

Financing (UCHTIF). Planner Wiese emphasized that this authorizes the district's creation, serving as an alternative to encourage development while preserving affordable housing without resorting to unsupported cuts to inclusionary housing requirements during a period of low housing starts. In response to a request for clarification from Councilor Clingan, Planner Wiese confirmed the action only opens the door for negotiations rather than mandating tool usage.

Councilor Clingan noted the designation could effectively incentivize construction. Councilor McLaughlin highlighted the presence of abandoned businesses in East Somerville, expressing strong support for neighborhood revitalization efforts that maintain inclusionary housing requirements.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, Ward Five City Councilor Sait, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

4. Zoning Ordinance (ID # [26-0835](#)) By Councilor Davis, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Clingan, Councilor Link, Councilor Mbah, Councilor Hardt, Councilor Sait and Councilor Wheeler

Proposing an amendment to Section 2.1.1 of the Zoning Ordinance regarding Homeless Shelters.

Councilor Davis introduced this item and noted that the Council previously discussed opening a homeless shelter in Ward 6 and explained that the intent of this item is to resolve confusion around the zoning ordinances and establish a clearer process to allow for more shelter options citywide. Chair Ewen-Campen noted that the Planning Board issued a positive recommendation on the item and Land Use Analyst Samantha Carr reviewed the document *Land Use - 2026-09-03 Homeless Shelter Provisions Research (with 26-0835)*.

Councilor Davis explained that while his initial draft included the Neighborhood Residence district to invite discussion, Analyst Carr's research highlighted the need for a more nuanced approach. He suggested requiring a special permit in Neighborhood Residence zones for homeless shelters and by right with a required neighborhood meeting in Urban Residence and commercial zones to lift development barriers. He added that the City Council could later pursue a separate amendment to create specific definitions that would allow smaller-scale uses, such as family stabilization and homeless youth shelters, in neighborhood residential areas.

Chair Ewen-Campen mentioned the Ward 3 warming center, located in a Neighborhood Residence zone, noting it has brought both positives and challenges that underscore the importance of a transparent public process and careful deliberation during special permit reviews. In response to

Councilor Clingan's question about if the proposal applies to drop-in style shelters, Councilor Davis clarified that essentially it does, noting that while certain shelter uses are already allowed, this proposal would permit defined homeless shelters either by right or via special permit depending on the zone. Councilor Sait expressed support for homeless shelters in these areas and asked how special permit conditions and nuances would be handled. Planning Division Deputy Director Fiona DiMartino confirmed that special permits for shelters would follow standard review procedures, allowing specific restrictions to be placed on a permit on a case-by-case basis. Councilor Clingan noted that the special permit process provides helpful flexibility depending on the specific use of the shelter.

Councilor Davis moved to amend Table 3.1.16 (Permitted Uses) by changing the designation for "Homeless Shelter" in the residential line from "P" (Permitted By Right) to "SP" (Special Permit) and and Table 9.1.1 (Permitted Uses) by changing the designation for "Homeless Shelter" in the Neighborhood Residence (NR) column from "P" (Permitted By Right) to "SP" (Special Permit). The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Davis, Clingan, Sait, McLaughlin and Ewen-Campen), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED AS AMENDED

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, Ward Five City Councilor Sait, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

Referenced Documents:

- Land Use - 2026-09-03 Homeless Shelter Provisions Research (with 26-0835)
- Land Use - 2026-09-03 Proposed Permitting Homeless Shelter With NR (with 26-0835)
- Land Use - 2026-09-03 Proposed Permitting Homeless Shelter Without NR (with 26-0835)