



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Land Use Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 15, 2026

6:30 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Ewen-Campen at 6:31 pm and adjourned at 8:24 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: Dan Bartman- Director of Planning and Zoning, Samantha Carr- Land Use Analyst, Amanda Nagim-Williams- Intergovernmental Affairs Director, and Courtney Henderson- City Clerk

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 # [26-1383](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Land Use Committee Meeting of September 3, 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. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-1259](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Sections 2.4.4, 3.1.7, 3.1.8, 3.1.9, 3.1.10, 3.1.11, 3.2.7, 3.2.8, 3.2.9, 3.2.10, 3.2.11, 4.1.7, 4.2.7, 4.3.7, 4.4.7 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinances to remove ground story elevation requirements.

Director Dan Bartman explained that the proposed amendment would remove the two-foot ground story elevation requirement for apartment buildings, two-story homes, and triple-deckers. He clarified that the elevation standard is primarily an architectural design guideline rather than a zoning requirement, which is why the Planning Department is recommending its removal from the Zoning Ordinance.

Councilor Clingan asked about the purpose of elevating a building two feet above ground level. Director Bartman explained that elevation can provide practical benefits, including reducing the risk of frozen pipes and minimizing flooding. Elevation may also be necessary for homes with crawl spaces. However, he noted that the requirement was primarily intended to promote a uniform architectural appearance throughout the City. Under the

proposed amendment, property owners and builders would have greater flexibility in determining the appropriate elevation.

Councilor Sait asked how the Planning Department determines whether a building should be elevated and whether the Department would provide recommendations. Director Bartman explained that the Department reviews several factors, including zoning regulations and floodplain conditions, and evaluates each project on a case-by-case basis. He reiterated that the two-foot elevation standard serves as a guideline rather than a mandatory requirement.

Councilor Ewen-Campen expressed his preference for expanding the Mayor's proposed amendment to remove additional provisions. He asked why the architectural guidelines were not included in the original proposal. Director Bartman explained that the guidelines were excluded because they are nonbinding and cannot be enforced.

Councilor Ewen-Campen subsequently recommended making amendments to the following sections: 3.3.1.15.A(1), 3.2.14.A, 4.1.7.F, 4.2.7.F, 4.3.7.F, and 4.4.7.F.

A motion was made by Councilor Ewen-Campen to approve the item as amended and direct Clerk's Office staff to incorporate the proposed changes and submit the amended language on behalf of the City Council.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED AS AMENDED**

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

ABSENT: Ward Six City Councilor Davis

3. Zoning Ordinance By Councilor Link
(ID # [26-1373](#)) That Section 3.1.7.c of the Zoning Ordinances be amended as detailed within.

Councilor Ewen-Campen requested that the item remain in committee. He indicated that he would consult with Councilor Link to determine the appropriate disposition of the item.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

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

ABSENT: Ward Six City Councilor Davis

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4. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-1336](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Sections 3.1.3, 3.1.6, 3.1.8, 3.1.9, 3.1.11, 3.1.12, 3.1.13, 3.1.16, 3.2.6 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to align with State Law regarding protected accessory dwelling units.
- Director Dan Bartman explained that the proposed amendments would bring the City's zoning regulations for backyard cottages, now referred to as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), into compliance with state regulations. He noted that state requirements allow ADUs within existing buildings or as detached structures and that the City's current regulations have resulted in larger backyard cottages than originally anticipated.
- Committee members expressed concerns about the size and height of ADUs, setback requirements, potential tenant displacement, and stormwater management. Councilors Davis, McLaughlin, Clingan, and Sait expressed support for ADUs while emphasizing the need for regulations that better reflect the City's original intent of permitting smaller backyard cottages.
- Councilor McLaughlin requested a legal opinion from the City Solicitor regarding state ADU requirements, along with data on residential demolitions, condominium conversions, and tenant displacement protections. Councilor Davis requested further review of basement square footage calculations and the City's green score requirements.
- Councilor Ewen-Campen proposed reducing the maximum ADU square footage to 1,152 square feet, limiting building height to 1.5 stories, and exploring provisions to ensure basement space is included in the total square footage. He indicated that he would work with staff to prepare amendment language for further committee consideration.
- RESULT:** **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**
5. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-1337](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Sections 2.4.5, 3.1.17, 3.2.16, 4.1.8, 4.1.9, 4.1.14, 4.2.8, 4.2.9, 4.2.14, 4.3.8, 4.3.9, 4.3.14, 4.4.8, 4.4.9, 4.4.15, 5.1.7, 5.1.8, 5.1.9, 5.1.16, 6.1.12, 6.2.7, 6.2.8, 6.2.14, 6.3.12, 6.4.9, 6.4.15, 6.5.7, 7.2.8 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to clarify requirements for principal entrances.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, Ward Five City Councilor Sait, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen
- ABSENT:** Ward Six City Councilor Davis
6. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-1258](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Sections 3.2.17, 4.1.15, 4.2.15, 4.3.15, 4.4.15, 5.1.16, 6.1.13, 6.2.14, 6.3.13, 6.4.16, 6.5.13 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to correct parking maximums.
- Director Bartman explained that the proposed amendment would correct
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various typographical errors in the Zoning Ordinance. He clarified that the changes are administrative in nature and would not result in any substantive modifications to the ordinance.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

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

ABSENT: Ward Six City Councilor Davis

7. Mayor's Request
(ID # [26-1338](#))

Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Sections 2.1.1, 2.4.5, 3.1.16, 3.2.8, 3.2.9, 3.2.10, 3.2.11, 3.2.15, 4.1.3, 4.1.7, 4.1.8, 4.1.9, 4.1.10, 4.1.13, 4.2.3, 4.2.7, 4.2.8, 4.2.9, 4.2.10, 4.2.13, 4.3.3, 4.3.7, 4.3.8, 4.3.9, 4.3.10, 4.3.13, 4.4.3, 4.4.7, 4.4.8, 4.4.9, 4.4.13, 5.1.3, 5.1.7, 5.1.8, 5.1.9, 5.1.10, 5.1.11, 5.1.14, 6.1.3, 6.1.7, 6.1.8, 6.1.11, 6.2.3, 6.2.7, 6.2.8, 6.2.9, 6.2.12, 6.3.3, 6.3.8, 6.4.3, 6.4.9, 6.4.11, 6.5.3, 6.5.7, 6.5.8, 6.5.11, 7.2.7, 7.2.10, 7.4.3, 7.4.6, 7.4.7, 7.4.8, 7.4.11, 8.1.1, 8.1.2, 8.1.4, 8.1.5, 8.1.6, 8.2.2, 8.2.4, 8.2.5, 8.4.16, 8.4.17, 8.4.19, 9.1.7, 12.1.1, 12.1.2, 12.1.4, 12.1.5, 12.1.6, 12.1.7, 12.3.5, 12.3.6, 12.3.7 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to update terminology for affordable dwelling units and commercial spaces.

Director Bartman explained that the proposed amendment would update the terminology used in the Zoning Ordinance to align with state definitions.

He noted that the City previously used the acronym "ADU" to refer to Affordable Dwelling Units. However, the Commonwealth now uses "ADU" to refer to Accessory Dwelling Units.

To avoid confusion and maintain consistency with state terminology, the proposed amendment would rename Affordable Dwelling Units as Price-Restricted Dwelling Units (PRDUs).

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

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

ABSENT: Ward Six City Councilor Davis

Referenced Documents:

Land Use- 2026-10-15 PADU Compliance Amendment 09.08.2025 (with 26-1336)