



Lowell City Council

Zoning/Housing SC Meeting

Michael Q. Geary
City Clerk

Date: March 30, 2021
Time: 6:00 PM
Location: Zoom/Remote Participation

PRESENT:

Present on Roll Call were Chairman Elliott, C. Chau and C. Nuon (Zoning SC). Chairman Drinkwater and C. Elliott, 1 absent (C. Mercier) (Housing SC). Also present was Eric Slagle (Inspectional Services), Manager Donoghue, Kara Keefe –Mullin (Asst. City Mgr.), C. Samaras and C. Conway,

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Chairman Elliott called the meeting to order noting the joint session with C. Drinkwater as the Chair of the Housing SC.

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

C. Drinkwater noted the need to address supply of housing so it is affordable and recognized the density of the City and that changes should not focus on certain neighborhoods but on all neighborhoods. C. Drinkwater noted it was just the start of the discussion and the report (Zoning for More Housing in Lowell) is quite extensive and more of deep dive is needed to ensure growth for our City. Manager Donoghue noted it was an informational report done at the request of a Council motion with no recommendations attached and that a more directed discussion would involve latest legislation entitled Housing Choice Bill which was enacted after this report. Mr. Slagle recognized the report was extensive and provided history of its preparation. Mr. Slagle noted that serious lack of affordable of rent burden housing units in Lowell which causes less housing costing more money. Mr. Slagle outlined housing vision in City which would include more triple-deckers and multiple unit housing. Mr. Slagle noted that the data is presented to show the housing urgency to the neighborhoods. Mr. Slagle noted that zoning reforms would be needed to address issue to capture more housing in more places; expand DMU Zone; and reevaluate riverfront zoning. Manager Donoghue noted any zoning changes are intensive and involve much public input. C. Elliott noted that many affordable housing plans are not reasonable to neighborhoods.



C. Elliott opened meeting up to public and the following addressed the body: Pat Vondal; Jerry Frechette; Deb Forgione; Angelica Beato; and Brian Meade. C. Nuon noted motion had been files with C. Rourke and that zoning changes needed with the assistance of neighborhood groups to ensure integrity of each area. C. Chau commented on the complexity of the report and items should be discussed in a public forum. Manager Donoghue reiterated that this was merely an informational report and if amending zoning charter is being sought that would be an entirely different approach which the administration would not recommend. C. Elliott noted report illustrates zoning changes which would affect neighborhoods and noted such changes must follow different path. C. Drinkwater recognized that there are concepts in the report which are not feasible but some ideas may have merit including discussions surrounding accessory dwelling units. Manager Donoghue suggested a discussion within subcommittees regarding recent Housing Choice Bill. **Motion** by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Drinkwater to refer to Zoning SC and Housing SC jointly the Housing Choice Bill for discussion; including discussion of accessory use dwellings. Adopted per Roll Call vote 5 yeas, 1 absent (C, Mercier). So voted. Mr. Slagle noted law had been sent to Council at prior meeting. C. Elliott recessed the discussion for later meeting

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn by C. Drinkwater, seconded by C. Nuon. So Voted.

Meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM

Michael Geary, City Clerk