

**PLANNING AND PERMITTING COMMITTEE
MEETING REPORT
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024 @ 6:00 P.M.**

Attendees: Council Vice President Kit Collins, Committee Chair; Councillor Matt Leming, Committee Vice-Chair; Council President Isaac “Zac” Bears; Councillor Anna Callahan; Councillor George Scarpelli; City Clerk Adam Hurtubise; other participants as noted in the body of this report.

Vice-Chair Leming called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m. on February 14, 2024 in the Medford City Council Chambers on the second floor of Medford City Hall and via Zoom. The purpose of the meeting was to address several papers referred to the Committee, particularly the Housing Stability Notification Ordinance and Housing Home Rule petitions. Vice President Collins gave an overview of the housing stability work to date.

Councillor Scarpelli said that this is a very important topic. He said he has had residents calling asking to table this portion because tonight is Ash Wednesday. He said we need to have more of an open dialogue.

Vice President Collins said she appreciates what Councillor Scarpelli said. She said that this is the beginning of the process. She explained the Home Rule Petition process. She said it is typical to send drafts of documents to the Council on the day of meetings after the meeting is noticed under the Open Meeting Law.

Councillor Scarpelli said a lot of homeowners are at Mass tonight. He said that this is a new process on how we are doing our committee and subcommittee work.

Vice President Collins said it is not her intent to vote to take action on this draft tonight. She discussed how rent control laws work. She said we can look to other cities for guidance.

Councillor Scarpelli said we need to be very careful. He said we do not have legal representation here tonight and that this could come back to bite us. He said that there are financial ramifications that could come back to the community. He said he doesn't want to find us in another BJ's situation. He urged caution. He said he would Section 22 this, but right now there is too much in play. He said rent control is a whole different animal that could change this community drastically and impact every homeowner. He asked that we table this to another date and move on to something else.

Councillor Scarpelli moved to table. With no second on the motion to table, discussion continued.

Councillor Callahan said that there are seven different home rule petitions listed and asked if there is legal language for any of them. Vice President Collins said she circulated language earlier today through the Clerk's Office. Councillor Callahan said

that right now we are discussing rent stabilization and Vice President Collins confirmed this.

Councillor Scarpelli asked for Open Meeting Law guidelines on documents in the packets and the Clerk provided them.

Vice President Collins said we are in the preliminary phase of discussions of an item that came up two years ago on a Council agenda and has been repeatedly discussed publicly. She said she understands and respects that more people want time to review the drafts.

President Bears arrived at 6:29 p.m.

Vice President Collins said that this is a proactive Council. She said we need to find a way to keep more Medford residents in Medford.

Eduardo Palacios, 766 Broadway, Everett, said that a home rule petition is necessary to protect the residents of Medford. He said we are seeing issues in multiple different cities in which rents are being raised dramatically because investors are trying to maximize profits. He asked the Council to protect Medford from a maximized profit scheme.

Katie McCann, 91 Rosmer Road, Jamaica Plain, is an organizer with a community justice organization in Boston. She said she has worked with Medford residents facing large rent increases. She said people who live in Medford have been displaced from Medford. She said rent control would immediately address the housing crisis. She said that this would be similar to the Somerville Home Rule Petition which passed unanimously.

Kelly Catallo, 9A Mountain Road, Burlington, a former Medford resident, said she could not afford to live in Medford and had to move to Burlington. She said both previous speakers work with a group that organizes tenants to fight landlords. She said that the new owners of Bradlee Road had to make significant improvements to the buildings and the tenants were paying lower than normal rents before those new landlords came in. She said she represents 732 landlords in the City of Medford. She said that the majority of landlords in Medford are small property owners. She read an e-mail from a resident of 60 years who opposes rent control. The e-mail said voters voted out rent control in 1994 and that there were other issues with tenants.

Councillor Scarpelli departed at 6:42 p.m.

Ms. Catallo asked for a notice to be sent out to all the landowners in the city.

President Bears said that it's important to have all the tools on the table. He said that there are people who want to regulate supply, some who want few regulations on landlords, and some who want extreme regulations on landlords. He said that the

answers might lie in all these areas, not one. He said this is a discussion about having the state let us have more tools in our toolbox. He said rent control and rent stabilization laws were allowed until 1994, when a ballot question passed by about 1 percent of the vote, and voters in the cities that had rent control voted overwhelmingly to keep rent control, and voters outside those cities provided the narrow majority that overruled the people in those cities with rent control that wanted to keep it. He said that there are exemptions, such as owners of two-family dwelling units when the owner lives in one unit and the tenant in the other. He said that the measure on the table addresses many of the questions raised tonight. He said that every reason for eviction is addressed under this policy, including the reasons raised by residents tonight. There are reasons why some of these eviction reasons are listed as just causes in the documents being reviewed tonight. He said that there needs to be interim measures until we achieve some level of balance.

Alicia Hunt, Director of Planning, Development, and Sustainability, said she has not had a chance to review this document but would be happy to review it. She said Medford has traditionally been a starter home community. She said that with developers and corporations buying houses, there is not much room for starter homes. She said she bought a starter home here. She said that in the past, with ordinances, counsel has asked for agreement on what would be included before starting legal review.

Councillor Callahan said that it appears that the person who wrote in for this meeting may have misunderstood the documents being discussed tonight.

Vice President Collins said she wants to focus on what exactly is being proposed. She said she wants everyone to understand what we mean when we discuss a just cause eviction.

Vice President Collins moved to circulate the background information, first draft of the Medford home rule petition, and sample home rule petition from Somerville as context, to all Councillors, and to the Director of PDS, the Senior Planner, and the Housing Staff Planner, for further review, and to request feedback and comments by February 28, 2024 (Councillor Callahan second, with an amendment from President Bears to give the new proposal a new paper number)—approved on a roll call vote of four in favor, zero opposed, and Councillor Scarpelli absent.

Vice President Collins moved to keep the paper in committee and to adjourn at 7:01 p.m. (Councillor Callahan second)—approved on a roll call vote of four in favor, zero opposed, and Councillor Scarpelli absent.

Vice-Chair Leming adjourned the meeting at 7:01 p.m.