



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: January 24, 2022

Subject: Cushing, et al., Zoning Petition

Recommendation: The Planning Board does NOT RECOMMEND adoption.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

On December 21, 2021, the Planning Board (the “Board”) held a public hearing to discuss a Zoning Petition by Karen Cushing, et al., to amend Section 11.207.6.1 of the Zoning Ordinance, Required Off-Street Accessory Parking for Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Projects. The Board heard a presentation from representatives of the Petitioners, and received written materials from staff in the City’s Community Development Department (CDD).

The Petition would amend the current regulations in Section 11.207.6.1 to require off-street parking consistent with the base zoning district. The AHO, adopted in 2020, establishes an alternative set of as-of-right zoning standards that can be applied to developments in which all housing units are made permanently affordable. The current AHO standards do not require a minimum number of off-street parking spaces for an AHO Project. In most cases, the base zoning would require a minimum of one off-street parking space per dwelling unit.

Following the presentation, public comment, and discussion among Board members, the Planning Board voted to transmit an unfavorable recommendation on this Petition to the City Council. Board members noted that there are strong differences of opinion regarding the City’s requirements for residential parking, and that there are many tradeoffs to be considered including housing costs, environmental goals, and equitable opportunities for residents. Board members commented that AHO Projects, like any residential development, will likely contain some households that own cars, thus creating demand for residential parking. Board members recalled that reduced minimum parking requirements were considered as part of the draft AHO zoning, but the City Council ultimately adopted a version of the AHO that did not include a minimum off-street parking requirement. Although the Board does not support changing the requirement at this time, Board members agreed that this issue should continue to be considered as the AHO is evaluated in the future. Board members are open to considering a minimum parking requirement if there is a demonstrated need, acknowledging that it may require more discussion to come to consensus around what the requirement should be.

The Planning Board voted 8-0 to transmit the above recommendation.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

*Catherine Preston Connolly*

Catherine Preston Connolly, Chair.