



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: January 24, 2022

Subject: Francis Donovan, et al., Zoning Petition

Recommendation: The Planning Board does NOT RECOMMEND adoption.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

On November 16, 2021, the Planning Board (the “Board”) held a public hearing to discuss a Zoning Petition by Francis Donovan, et al., to amend Articles 4.000, 5.000, 6.000, and 20.000 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. 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 was presented as having three parts. “Part 1” pertains to zoning for single-family detached dwellings and appears to propose that existing single-family dwellings could be converted to up to three-family dwellings, and existing two-family dwellings could be converted to up to four-family dwellings, with limited exterior alterations. It also proposes to apply requirements for affordable units to dwellings with three units or more. “Part 2” would require that surface parking for residential uses be paved with permeable surfacing materials. “Part 3” would create a “Citywide Commercial, Institutional, and Public Property Overlay District” that would apply new requirements to “properties within the City of Cambridge owned or leased by employers of more than 100 full-time persons, students or affiliates.”

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. The Board is broadly supportive of goals of the Petition to eliminate some barriers to reusing the existing housing stock, to allow for multifamily dwellings citywide, and to reduce stormwater runoff from residential parking. However, Board members expressed that those issues should be part of a more holistic discussion that considers more comprehensive solutions. Board members were informed that the City Council has asked CDD staff to work with the Planning Board to engage in such a discussion. Board members also noted that some aspects of the current Petition are difficult to address because the text is unclear, and that “Part 3” of the Petition is beyond the scope of zoning and potentially requires action at a more regional scale, though it does raise important issues about employment and demand for housing.

The Board looks forward to receiving more detail about the City Council’s request to discuss these matters further, and is eager to engage in this discussion in the near future with the support of CDD staff.

The Planning Board voted 8-1 to transmit the above recommendation.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

*Catherine Preston Connolly*

Catherine Preston Connolly, Chair.