



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: November 28, 2023

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Subject: Pierson, et al., Zoning Petition (Lodging Houses)

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Recommendation: The Planning Board does not recommend adoption.

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To the Honorable, the City Council,

On November 21, 2023, the Planning Board (the “Board”) held a public hearing to discuss a Zoning Petition by Allene Pierson, et al., (the “Petitioners”) to amend the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in Section 4.31(i)(3) of the Table of Use Regulations such that “Lodging House” is changed from a permitted use (“Yes<sup>7</sup>”) to a prohibited use (“No”) in the Residence C, C-1, C-1A, C-2, C2A, C-2B, C-3, C-3A, and C-3B zoning districts.

The Board heard a presentation from representatives of the Petitioners, heard public comment, received written materials before the hearing from Community Development Department staff, and asked clarifying questions. After discussion among Board members, the Board voted unanimously to forward a negative recommendation to City Council.

Board members agreed that the Petition proposes too broad a change that would make many existing uses non-conforming throughout the city. Lodging houses are deeply rooted in the history of Cambridge and in cities around the country, and they provide housing options at a time when housing is needed. As a residential use, it would not make sense to prohibit them in residential districts. Board members noted that many of the concerns raised by the Petitioners are addressed by other regulations, including the “Short-Term Rentals” section of the Zoning Ordinance, building, fire, and other safety codes, noise and public health regulations, and licensing laws and procedures. Some Board members suggested that the City Council could consider a special permit process as a way to address site-specific concerns, but others cautioned against being overly burdensome toward this type of housing as there are already other regulatory processes in place.

The Planning Board voted 9-0 in favor of transmitting the above report.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

Mary Flynn, Chair.