



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: May 6, 2025

Subject: Floodplain Zoning Petition

Recommendation: The Planning Board recommends ADOPTION.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

On April 29, 2025, the Planning Board (the “Board”) held a public hearing to discuss a Zoning Petition by the City Council to amend Articles 5.000 and 20.000 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. The Petition proposes to amend the Flood Plain Overlay District (now referred to as the Floodplain Overlay District) to reference the latest maps and data from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and to incorporate the model ordinance language provided by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Communities that are part of the National Flood Insurance Program must update their regulations in accordance with FEMA and DEP regulations by July 8, 2025.

The Board heard a presentation from staff in the City’s Community Development Department (CDD). Staff from the Department of Public Works (DPW), Conservation Commission, Inspectional Services Department (ISD), and Law Department were present. No members of the public gave testimony. Following the presentation and discussion among Board members, the Planning Board voted to forward this report to the City Council with a positive recommendation.

The Board finds this proposal to be straightforward. The only substantive change is that floodplain regulations would be applied administratively rather than through a Planning Board special permit process. Because the Conservation Commission also holds public hearings and issues Orders of Conditions for development in the floodplain, and has greater expertise with floodplain and other environmental regulations, the additional Planning Board special permit process seems unnecessary. Development in the floodplain will continue to be reviewed by the Planning Board if it is subject to Project Review or other applicable zoning requirements.

The Planning Board voted 5-0 in favor of transmitting the above report, with one member absent.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

Mary Flynn, Chair.