



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: December 14, 2022

Subject: Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA) Stipends Zoning Petition

Recommendation: ADOPTION, with additional comments.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

On December 6, 2022, the Planning Board (the “Board”) held a public hearing to discuss a Zoning Petition by the City Council to amend Section 10.12 of the Zoning Ordinance to delete the sentence that currently reads “They shall serve without compensation” with respect to BZA members (the “Petition”).

Following public comment, questions to staff from the City’s Community Development Department (CDD) and Law Department, and discussion among Board members, the Planning Board voted to transmit a favorable recommendation on this Petition to the City Council, with the following comments.

The Board understands that the Petition is related to a City effort to begin providing stipends to members of various appointed boards and commissions. The Board sees no reason why BZA members should be singled out as ineligible for stipends if they are provided to members of similar boards and commissions.

Board members expressed different views on the merits of providing stipends to members of boards and commissions. Several Board members and CDD staff noted that the time and cost of serving on these groups can discourage some community members who would otherwise bring valuable perspectives to the process. However, some members expressed the view that stipends might not make a considerable difference in participation. Some members said that we would not know for sure until we tried.

Before offering stipends, the Board strongly recommends that the City determine how it might change the status of certain members as “special municipal employees” under state conflict-of-interest laws. A change in that designation could impact members with certain qualifications.

The Planning Board voted 8-0 in favor of transmitting the above recommendation.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

Catherine Preston Connolly

Catherine Preston Connolly, Chair.