

Offered by Councilor Kenzie Bok



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

AN ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING THE CURRENT STATE OF COOPERATIVE HOUSING IN BOSTON AND STRATEGIES FOR ITS FURTHER EXPANSION

WHEREAS: Cooperative housing developments of many types have flourished in Boston for many years, especially in District 8, from West End Place to the Beacon Hill Friends House to the Kenmore Tower to the numerous limited-equity cooperatives of East Fenway to Charlesbank in Mission Hill; *and,*

WHEREAS: Cooperative housing arrangements, particularly limited-equity cooperatives, provide a proven mechanism for keeping people from all walks of life in the city, especially middle-income families and seniors, at a time at which so many are being priced out of Boston; *and,*

WHEREAS: The diverse self-governing communities instantiated by cooperatives reflect in miniature the life of a city at its best, and tend to encourage members to become active, engaged citizens in their wider neighborhoods and the city as a whole; *and,*

WHEREAS: Housing cooperatives can serve as a mechanism for people with modest capital holdings to begin to build equity, thereby promoting a more democratic economy and countering the deepening economic inequality of our city and society; *and,*

WHEREAS: Perhaps more than any other form of housing, cooperatives resolve the tension between housing as a locus of shelter and community and housing as a form of capital-holding, a tension that currently threatens to empty our communities of low-income and middle-income residents in favor of an increasingly fast-paced real estate commodity market; *and,*

WHEREAS: *An Act to guarantee a tenant's right of first refusal* (H1260/S786), which would provide a key mechanism for enabling tenants of large multifamily buildings to transform such buildings into cooperatives upon sale by the current owner, has been introduced in the state legislature and supported by the Mayor of Boston, but has not yet secured passage; *and,*

WHEREAS: Boston's main existing limited-equity cooperatives were nearly all created over the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s with the direct participation of Boston's city government, from the 276-unit Charlesbank Cooperative, which was built on land transferred from the Boston Redevelopment Authority, to the 46-unit Fensgate Cooperative, established in a building that had previously been used as a city trade school and "Little City Hall"; *and,*

WHEREAS: The City of Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) has recently enabled the transfer of a parcel of city land in the Marcella / Highland Park neighborhood for production of a new 23-unit limited equity cooperative; *and,*

WHEREAS: The City of Boston must look for opportunities to support the creation of cooperative housing at a much larger scale if we are to stem the tide of displacement and seed the conditions for a healthy, diverse, truly mixed-income housing ecosystem; *and,*

WHEREAS: The remarkable successes of many of Boston's housing cooperatives, and the remarkable citizens like Enoch Woodhouse who call them home, are too little known, and have important lessons to teach about the specific parameters that best enable new cooperative housing development; *and,*

WHEREAS: Cooperative housing, while no substitute for the production of additional subsidized housing for people of extremely low incomes, has an essential part to play in the overall strategy of urgent action required to address Boston's housing crisis; *NOW THEREFORE BE IT*

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss the state of cooperative housing in Boston and further explore creative approaches to expanding such housing for city residents by using public land or mechanisms such as a publicly-financed revolving line of credit, and that representatives from the City of Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development (DND), the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA), the Massachusetts Association of Housing Cooperatives (MAHC), the Greater Boston Community Land Trust Network (GBCLTN), and the public be invited to testify.

Filed: February 3, 2020