

Offered by Councilors Kenzie Bok and Matt O'Malley



## CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

### ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING ZONING RELIEF FOR 100% AFFORDABLE AND DEEPLY AFFORDABLE PROJECTS

*WHEREAS:* The City of Boston is in a housing crisis, with 49.6% of Boston area renters “rent-burdened” by putting more than 30% of their income toward housing costs, more than 50,000 families on the waiting list for a Boston Housing Authority public housing unit, and a growing population of Black, Brown, immigrant, and low income renters at risk of eviction once the Massachusetts moratorium on evictions concludes; *and*

*WHEREAS:* Decent and affordable housing is a social determinant of health, with well-documented direct and indirect effects on respiratory health, sleep quality, educational attainment, ability to access and maintain a suitable job, stress levels and feelings of isolation, mood, and many other aspects of wellbeing; *and*

*WHEREAS:* The COVID-19 pandemic has reemphasized the public health need to ensure that all of Boston’s residents have access to decent and affordable housing, including deeply affordable housing for residents that are homeless or unstably housed; *and*

*WHEREAS:* Often the individuals most in need of housing are underrepresented in community planning and development processes, as documented in a 2018 study by Einstein, Palmer, and Glick, frequently leading across Massachusetts to the delay or altogether rejection of much-needed affordable projects; *and*

*WHEREAS:* Such projects are also frequently delayed after approval by lawsuits, a problem which a provision of the Housing Choice bill, recently passed at the State House as part of an Economic Development package, seeks to reduce through requiring such lawsuits to post a significant bond, but which could also be reduced by offering less basis for such lawsuits in zoning; *and*

*WHEREAS:* A recent example of this problem is the legal suit against a joint project proposed by the Pine Street Inn and The Community Builders with strong community support, a lawsuit which may delay or imperil a much-needed affordable housing development to make real the promise of a Housing-First and supportive housing approach for many unhoused Bostonians; *and*

*WHEREAS:* At a Boston City Council Housing Committee hearing sponsored by Councilors Bok and O’Malley on November 10, 2021, Councilors, the Mayor’s

administration, and housing advocates discussed the importance of and potential options for reasonable zoning relief to avoid such delays for 100% affordable housing and deeply affordable developments, including a zoning overlay; *and*

*WHEREAS:* The Housing Committee hearing also included presentations by Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui of Cambridge and Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen of Somerville on their municipalities' affordable housing zoning overlays which serve as relevant examples of effective zoning reform; *NOW THEREFORE BE IT*

*ORDERED:* That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss language for a zoning code amendment for zoning relief for 100% affordable and deeply affordable projects, and that members of the Administration, along with housing advocates, developers of affordable housing, and the public, be invited to testify.

Filed on: January 15, 2021