



# ORDINANCE COMMITTEE

## COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, May 28, 2024

12:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

**REVISED CALL OF MEETING.** The Ordinance Committee will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, May 28, 2024 from 12:00p.m.-2:00p.m. to discuss Citizen’s Zoning Petition by Joseph S. Ronayne et al. to amend the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in Articles 4, 5, and 8. APP 2024 #14.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Joan Pickett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
E. Denise Simmons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Ordinance Committee was held on Wednesday, May 22, 2024. The meeting was Called to Order at 12:00 p.m. by the Co- Chair, Councillor Toner. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

**At the request of the Co-Chair, Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

- Councillor Azeem – Present/Remote
- Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Pickett – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Absent
- Councillor Toner – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Wilson – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Mayor Simmons – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

**Present – 8, Absent – 1. Quorum established.**

Co-Chair Toner offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to discuss Citizen’s Zoning Petition by Joseph S. Ronayne et al. to amend the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in Articles 4, 5, and 8, Application 2024 #14. Present at the meeting was Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for the Community Development Department (CDD), Jeff Roberts,

Director of Zoning and Development, and Megan Bayer, Acting City Solicitor. Chris Cotter, Housing Director, was present via Zoom. Co-Chair Toner noted that the Petitioner, Joseph Ronayne, was also present at the meeting.

**Co-Chair Toner opened Public Comment.**

Ann Tennis, 71 Griswold Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of the petition.

Helen Walker, 43 Linnaean Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of the petition.

Suzanne Blier, 5 Fuller Place, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of the petition.

Marilee Meyer, 10 Dana Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments relative to addressing green space and climate change.

Ann Stewart, 25-31 Wheeler Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of the petition.

Kelly Dolan, Upland Road, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of the petition.

Amy Waltz, 12 Blakeslee Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments relative to the environmental impact of creating more density.

Heather Hoffman, 214 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of affordable housing.

Douglas Brown, 35 Standish Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of affordable housing.

**Co-Chair Toner recognized Councillor Nolan who made a motion to close public comment. Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Absent

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Mayor Simmons – Yes

**Yes – 8, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.**

Co-Chair Toner recognized the Petitioner who gave a presentation titled “Ronayne et al. Citizens Petition. Allowing Multifamily Housing Development Across the City and Easing Residential Development”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation offered a review of discussions relative to the petition between the Planning Board and CDD, regulations and requirements, and proposed zoning language.

Co-Chair Toner recognized Jeff Roberts who reviewed the recommendation from CDD to the Planning Board, which was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. Iram Farooq provided additional comments to support CDD's recommendation and suggestions on how to move forward with this petition and other conversations happening in the Ordinance and the Housing Committees currently regarding zoning and affordable housing.

Co-Chair Toner recognized Councillor Nolan who shared her excitement for moving towards ending exclusionary zoning and how this petition offers similar suggestions that were brought forward to the Housing Committee from CDD in a recent Committee meeting. Iram agreed that there are overlaps and similarities to the discussion in the Housing Committee. Jeff Roberts noted how the report references some of the comparisons and what questions/concerns need to be addressed to go forward. The Petitioner responded by providing a review of how the zoning language can address changes and support other changes that are in the process of happening.

Co-Chair Toner recognized Councillor Azeem who offered comments that highlighted the importance of being intentional and moving forward at a slower pace when it comes to exclusionary zoning. In addition, Councillor Azeem offered suggestions on how the process could look like moving forward with having similar language currently in the Housing Committee. Councillor Azeem shared concerns regarding some of the language in the petition relative to ADU's and spoke on the importance of ending exclusionary zoning and building affordable housing units.

Co-Chair Toner recognized Co-Chair McGovern who noted the importance regarding the process of zoning language and shared that he agreed with some of the comments made by Councillor Azeem. Co-Chair McGovern shared that he also agreed with the suggestion by CDD to refer this petition back to the Housing Committee and CDD for more discussion and review.

Co-Chair Toner recognized Councillor Pickett who thanked the Petitioner for their presentation and the background information that was included. Councillor Pickett offered comments regarding the petition and multifamily housing, as well as noting how significant changes will be with zoning if this language, or any language regarding ending exclusionary zoning, goes forward. Councillor Pickett shared that she believes there needs to be more discussion in order for something like this to move forward in a way that everyone agrees is best for the City.

Co-Chair Toner recognized Councillor Siddiqui who noted the importance of reflecting on the different conversations around similar topics in Committees. Councillor Siddiqui agreed that there needs to be more discussion in Committee regarding the proposed language in the petition and in the Housing Committee to create the kind of policy that everyone is comfortable with.

Co-Chair Toner recognized Councillor Wilson who shared she appreciates the conversations around housing in Cambridge and the work that went into the petition. Councillor Wilson noted the importance of having a community process for voices to be heard. Councillor Wilson shared that she agrees there needs to be more conversation to create language and policy that meets the needs of the community.

Co-Chair Toner asked the Acting City Solicitor if the Committee were to vote the petition down would it prevent the Council from having additional conversations. Megan Bayer reviewed zoning law. Co-Chair Toner asked the team from CDD if current projects around the Cambridge Street Study, Alewife Quad, Central Square, and North Mass Ave. would be put on hold if there is a zoning proposal in Committee, or would they be included in those studies with, and what the planning process would look like going forward with those studies. Iram Farooq responded and provided information on how the City would continue with and adapt these projects to reflect the new zoning language if it were passed.

**Co-Chair Toner recognized Co-Chair McGovern who made a motion to refer Citizen's Zoning Petition by Joseph S. Ronayne et al., back to the full City Council with a recommendation to forward the Petition to the Housing Committee for further discussion. Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Absent

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Mayor Simmons – Yes

**Yes – 8, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.**

**Co-Chair Toner recognized Councillor Nolan who made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Pickett – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Absent

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Mayor Simmons – Yes

**Yes – 8, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.**

**The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:45p.m.**

Attachment A – The City Clerk's Office received eighteen communications from the public.

**Clerk's Note:** The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/758?view\\_id=1&redirect=true](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/758?view_id=1&redirect=true)

**A communication was received from Petitioner Joe Ronayne, transmitting a presentation regarding multifamily housing.**

**A communication was received from Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development, transmitting a report from the Community Development Department to the Planning Board.**

**A Citizens Zoning Petition Has been received from Joseph S. Ronayne, et al. regarding amending the current Articles 4, 5 and 8.**

# Attachment A

**Erwin, Nicole**

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**From:** jatennis@comcast.net  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 28, 2024 2:15 PM  
**To:** City Clerk; City Council; City Manager  
**Subject:** READ AT ORDINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING  
**Attachments:** Ann Tennis comment to Ordinance Committee May 28 2024.docx

To: City Council Ordinance Committee  
From: Ann Tennis, 71 Griswold Street (Ronayne petition signer)  
Re: Zoning Petition by Joseph S. Ronayne, et al., to amend the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in Articles 4.000, 5.000, and 8.000  
Date: May 28, 2024

At the Housing Committee's meeting on May 8, Iram Farooq and Jeff Roberts, from Community Development, noted that CDD's involvement in affordable and multi-family housing zoning and development has never stopped.

The resident-originated Ronayne petition is the logical next advancement because it brings the zoning code's three residential districts into alignment; allows for townhouse construction and other multi-family uses; and puts an end to exclusionary zoning.

Rezoning an entire City will take a lot of effort.

The Ronayne petition gives CDD and affordable housing supporters and developers, institutions, businesses, and residents the time to collaborate in bringing the most logical, do-able rezoning proposal to the full Council for consideration.

By approving the Ronayne petition, the Ordinance Committee will reassure the public that the City Council is on the right track.

Thank you.

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Kelly Dolan <kelly.dolan.kd@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 28, 2024 11:34 AM  
**To:** Azeem, Burhan; City Council; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Pickett, Joan; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Toner, Paul; Wilson, Anthony; City Clerk; Simmons, Denise; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan  
**Subject:** Ordinance Committee 5/28 Ronayne Petition

Hello Ordinance Committee

Kelly Dolan of Upland Road, here to speak in support of Ronayne petition as one of the signers.

We have 3 children so we see the struggle to find affordable housing in the Boston area. For years now I've heard local YIMBY groups and many on this Council say that exclusionary zoning is the biggest reason why our housing costs are so high. That it's home owners that are keeping single family zoning from changing to keep others out. While it's an overly simplistic narrative to our affordability issue it's been said so many times that many

believe it. What is really true is that Cambridge is guilty of having some districts that are not zoned for multi family and the community is in agreement that it's not fair and should be rectified. It's one of the few things I've heard residents agree upon in quite a while.

So since the Council created this narrative that our zoning reflects our values then it's incumbent upon you to fix it. It's been frustrating to watch the city take these bold moves with uncharted overlay proposals while not addressing this very glaring flaw that exists in our base zoning.

So when we heard about this citizen petition my husband, a local architect, and I were happy to sign to try and finally rectify this inequity in our zoning code. This petition does exactly that, it ends the hypocrisy of having exclusionary zones in certain parts of the city while we tell everyone how we are a welcoming and just city.

We were quite curious to then see a sudden rush of activity from the Housing Committee once our petition was filed, and while a few councilors are trying to sell this new proposal as more bold action, the reality is that the idea is far from fleshed out, its unintended consequences not yet understood and it proposes to dramatically change the landscape of this city. It's going to take a long time to get the details of this plan worked out and to get the political will to actually pass it. While the Ronayne petition sits before you, ready to end exclusionary zoning right now. Finally.

Thank you



Kelly Dolan

Sent from Gmail Mobile

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** hwalker434@rcn.com  
**Sent:** Monday, May 27, 2024 9:19 AM  
**To:** Azeem, Burhan; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Pickett, Joan; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Toner, Paul; Wilson, Ayesha; Simmons, Denise; City Manager  
**Cc:** City Clerk  
**Subject:** In Support of Ronayne Petition

Dear Members of the Cambridge City Council and City Manager Huang:

I strongly urge you to vote YES on the Ronayne petition. In Housing Committee, at Council, and at the Planning Board, there has been widespread agreement on revising zoning to facilitate multifamily housing of all housing types citywide. Vote YES on Ronayne, while letting more divisive provisions of the Housing Chairs' proposal have their own **separate** debate.

For example, regarding the Housing Chairs' proposal for bonus height to 6 stories for multifamily housing development with inclusionary units:

- Some commenters rightly say that inclusionary housing for incomes over \$51 K does nothing for our pressing problem of deep affordability.
- Some commenters rightly say that there are few lots within A-1, A-2, and B that are large enough to accommodate 6 stories, unless the intent is to encourage massive buy-ups and teardowns.
- Some commenters remind us that if we drastically increase the value of what can be built, we increase the value of the lots, thus putting them out of reach of affordable housing developers, **and also** increasing taxes for neighbors.
- Some commenters remind us that 6 stories is out of scale with neighborhood context, will impact parking and green space, and should be restricted to AHO corridors and squares.
- Some tell us that interest rates and current land values are the real problem, and zoning changes beyond simply allowing multifamily housing citywide will have little effect.

This will be a long and fraught debate. It will require extensive research by CDD. It will require data and analysis of results. Of necessity there will be iteration after iteration of proposals to promote multifamily housing.

Please do what you can do today to promote multifamily housing citywide, and say YES to the Ronayne petition.

With many thanks for your consideration,  
Helen Walker  
43 Linnaean Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Jacquelyn Fahey Sandell <jfaheysandell@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 22, 2024 7:22 AM  
**To:** City Council  
**Cc:** City Clerk; City Manager  
**Subject:** Re: Please vote for Ronayne petition and not housing committee proposal

*I am in favor of allowing multi family house if city wide but am not in favor of increased heights nor decreased green spaces and trees. Just look at the removal of the trees in central square which now looks like a collection of bricks. With the removal of more historic homes, green spaces, and trees, Cambridge will not be the kind of city we wish to pass on to the next generation, much less remain of interest to those who want to live here now and in the near future.*

**Of the two current up-zoning initiatives, the Ronayne petition has the benefit of balancing more density with preserving as much of the urban fabric, green spaces and trees, as well as historic neighborhood features and buildings. The Ronayne petition leaves the current requirements for**

**setbacks and private open space, and the 35-foot height limit,**

**unchanged. BZA review must be maintained.**

**If you move forward without discretionary review (BZA) you will remove**

**the ONE way that local residents can see plans for and provide insight**

**into new buildings or additions that go into their neighborhoods.**

**Thank you for your consideration.**

**Jacqui Fahey Sandell and Mason Sandell**

**8 Clinton Street**

Sent from my iPhone

On May 12, 2024, at 7:09 PM, Jacquelyn Fahey Sandell <jfaheysandell@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Councilors,

I urge you to limit the proposed six-story (with 20% inclusionary) housing structures to the AHO corridors and squares and draw up specific neighborhood by neighborhood plans for other housing changes on a case-by-case basis. Please send this zoning petition to the Neighborhood and Long Term Planning Committee to allow more process and community input before zoning language is created. We and other concerned Cambridge residents urge that a 5-year report be done on the impacts of this decision, especially on the impact of green spaces, traffic congestion, parking and small businesses along the corridors. It is unacceptable that the city would enable homeowners to make changes to their homes without the BZA, eliminating discretionary review. This is problematic, giving a blank check to developers, leaving out the opportunity for input from nearby residents and professionals who have a track record in addressing these kinds of issues. Often the BZA is the only opportunity that neighbors have to address the design elements of proposed new adjacent buildings. It is important to protect buildings that provide character, history and culture to the city and safeguard them and maintain the architectural essence and history of Cambridge wherever we can.

I am also concerned about a billion dollar budget for the city with a declining tax base, and urge the Finance and budget committee to look hard at existing investments. As a concerned citizen, I would like to know from our city manager how much the city has invested per AHO unit per square foot.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,  
Jacqui Fahey Sandell and Mason Sandell  
8 Clinton Street

**Erwin, Nicole**

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**From:** Susan Cooke <susanmcooke@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 21, 2024 4:59 PM  
**To:** City Council; City Clerk; City Manager  
**Subject:** Ronayne et al. Zoning Petition and Housing Committee Up-Zoning Proposal

While I am unable to attend the Planning Board meeting this evening and the Housing Committee meeting tomorrow evening, I want to express my grave concern about both the petition and the up-zoning proposal now under consideration. As a 50+ year Cambridge resident, including more than 30 years in the Larchwood neighborhood, I am very concerned about the broad scope and serious impact of both the petition and the proposal, particularly on those living in my neighborhood which is largely comprised of single family homes and duplexes.

Both the petition and the proposal would sanction much higher and more dense residential housing without regard to urban planning principles to ensure proper building heights and setbacks to achieve a livable environment for everyone. In addition, the petition and proposal would further exacerbate the traffic and parking issues that we are now experiencing with the buildout of the Alewife area and the conversion of highway lanes into bicycle lanes.

As an environmental attorney who spent many years working on large and complex projects, I learned the importance of appropriate regulations and ordinances to preserve the quality of life for both existing and new residents. I trust that both the Planning Board and the Housing Committee will address those concerns in their consideration of any changes to current building requirements.

Susan M. Cooke

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** hannumab@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 21, 2024 2:41 PM  
**To:** Azeem, Burhan; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Pickett, Joan; Simmons, Denise; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Toner, Paul; Wilson, Ayesha; City Clerk; City Manager; Marcelo Marchetti  
**Cc:** City Council  
**Subject:** Re: Ronayne et al. and Azeem-Siddiqui Proposals: please vote against it

My husband, Hurst Hannum, and I, Ann Hannum, residents at 9 Walden Mews, Cambridge, MA, for 30 years, strongly support these statements from Marcelo Marchetti. We are very much against the Ronayne *et al* and Housing Committee (Azeem-Siddiqui) extensions to the AHO proposal which already betrayed the 5-year review period mandated in the originally approved AHO.

As has been noted in many ongoing discussions, these revisions are being pushed ahead of that timeline in a desperate attempt to satisfy the special interests being catered to while ignoring the opinion of the Cambridge citizens.

These proposals will negatively impact the city as they are poorly planned and not integrated with a comprehensive plan to ensure the livability offered by the city (infrastructure, public transportation, etc.).

Please vote against these two proposals to further dilute the AHO containment measures.

Respectfully,

Ann Barger Hannum  
Hurst Hannum  
9 Walden Mews  
Cambridge, MA 02140

On Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at 09:40:36 AM EDT, Marcelo Marchetti <marcelo.marchetti@icloud.com> wrote:

As a resident of Cambridge for the past 31 years, I want to express my very strong opposition to the Ronayne *et al.* and Housing Committee (Azeem-Siddiqui) extensions to the AHO proposal which already betrayed the 5-year review period mandated in the originally approved AHO. As has been noted in many ongoing discussions, these revision are being pushed ahead of that timeline in a desperate attempt to satisfy the special interests being cateredwhile ignoring the opinion of the Cambridge citizens.

These proposals will negatively impact the city as they are poorly planned and not integrated with a comprehensive plan to ensure the livability offered by the city (infrastructure, public transportation, etc.).

Please vote against these two proposals to further dilute the AHO containment measures.

Respectfully,

Marcelo Marchetti  
7 Walden Mews  
Cambridge, MA 02140

Marcelo Marchetti ||| Email: [marcelo.marchetti@icloud.com](mailto:marcelo.marchetti@icloud.com) ||| Mobile: +1 857.928.0136

**Erwin, Nicole**

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**From:** Marilee Meyer <mbm0044@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 21, 2024 1:46 PM  
**To:** Pacheco, Maria; Roberts, Jeffrey; Farooq, Iram; City Clerk; Joan Pickett; Toner, Paul; Nolan, Patricia  
**Subject:** PLANNING BOARD Please support the Ronayne Petition

PLANNING BOARD- HOUSING- RONAYNE PETITION 5-21-24

Dear Planning Board,

In the past 5 years, we have seen a systematic dismantling of Cambridge with a number of up-zoning ordinances before the ink has dried— now followed by the Housing Committee. Problematic is the Council's continued formulaic approach with standardized over-sized dimensions, **non-discretionary review**, eliminating city-wide setbacks and open-space, and going from 35 ft in height to 6-stories on tight side streets as-of-right.

While addressing multi-family housing and density, the **Ronayne petition** encourages balance in a neighborhood context —not the teardowns fostered by the Housing Committee (written by CDD). Because CDD was **engrossed in the Housing committee presentation**, they “didn't have time to analyze the Ronayne petition”. Citizen petitions continually calling for a nuanced and balanced approach are ignored. **There is more consideration and flexibility in the Ronayne petition than in the hard-edged formulaic housing committee proposal generated by Council and CDD because it is easier to enforce city-wide.** Because 80% of Cambridge is non-conforming, how is one to standardize zoning? Indeed, in some of those lots, there may be an individual opportunity for more units. By all accounts, another floor of units on the AHO Norfolk St was suggested. A special permit might have done just that.

We need multi-family housing, and many details are addressed in the Ronayne petition. The Council's version for housing wants to eliminate BZA oversight. The Historical Commission has been neutered and ignored altogether. Teardowns contribute to landfill off-gassing, countering climate change efforts.

The Ronayne petition should be passed to Council so common points (dimensions, set-backs, FAR) can be **reconciled** with the pre-determined Housing Committee proposal to find the best solution. Citizen petitions, often ignored- also point out needed balance in policy, environmental justice, generational housing, and context. The Council and the Planning Board need to consider ALL Citizens, not just the single-issue voices who do not understand the broader consequences. The two multi-family proposals should give priority to long-range PLANNING rather than a quick fix that favors market-rate housing over affordable units. Quick is not better and the more voices considered, the more buy-in the Council will have. Pass the Ronayne Petition and let Council reconcile it with their sterile and formulaic master plan.

Thank you,

Marilee Meyer + 10 Dana St + 02138 + [mbm0044@aol.com](mailto:mbm0044@aol.com)



## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Suzanne Blier <suzannepblier@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 21, 2024 11:42 AM  
**To:** City Council; City Manager; City Clerk  
**Subject:** Housing Committee - Citywide Upzoning

Honorable Cambridge City Councillors, and Members of the Housing Committee

There are two current zoning petitions in play to facilitate development of multifamily housing citywide: the Ronayne petition and the Housing Committee Chairs' vision. We also had an earlier petition, the Donovan petition, sought to do this as well.

Please address the following question: What are these petitions attempting to do? If it is to bring down housing prices, will the removal of our current sustainable housing to build more expensive market rate housing achieve this, or will it fuel still more housing cost increases. And, with the removal of more historic homes, green spaces, and trees, be the kind of city we wish to pass on to the next generation, much less remain of interest to those who want to live here now and in the near future.

Of the two current up-zoning initiatives, the Ronayne petition has the benefit of balancing more density with preserving as much of the urban fabric, green spaces and trees, as well as historic neighborhood features and buildings. The Ronayne petition leaves the current requirements for setbacks and private open space, and the 35-foot height limit, unchanged.

If you move forward without discretionary review (BZA) you will remove the ONE way that local residents get to see plans for and provide insight into new buildings or additions that go into their neighborhoods.

Allowing greater density in districts A-1, A-2 and B also will lead to a bonanza of teardown activity. While campaigning for City Council last fall, Hao Wang spoke movingly of how, after the fact, people of Beijing regretted tearing down the old historic neighborhoods. CHC Demolition Delay review should be strengthened. And BZA review, including the opportunity for neighborhood input, must be preserved.

BZA and CHC review are really critical in an already dense historic city such as ours, and the Housing Committee proposal seeks a plan that would be "without discretionary review" (page 14 of Housing Chairs' May 8<sup>th</sup> slide deck: <http://cambridgema.ig2.com/citizens/FileOpen.aspx?Type=1&ID=4050&Inline=True>)

If the Housing Community chooses to propose more luxury (market rate) housing, risking fueling housing costs here even more, I urge them to at least maintain the front yards and rear setbacks, and to put and residence above four stories (e.g. 5-6 stories) on the corridors.

Please ask and answer the question as to whether adding four- to six-story buildings citywide will 1) further compete with affordable housing developers, and 2) what in the zoning petition will preclude wealthy residents and developers from simply building taller and larger McMansions exacerbating city wealth differences as well as environmental harm.

As you know, we are in a climate crisis and zoning districts A-1, A-2 and B because of the tree canopy have lower summer air temperatures than denser districts of the city. Envision climate goals require that temperatures everywhere be lowered, not that temperatures in A-1, A-2 and B be raised. Thus, it is critical to preserve existing open space and tree canopy in zoning districts to undergo significant change.

It is also important to remember that tearing down and sending usable buildings to the landfill, building new rather than adaptive reuse, negatively affects carbon reduction goals. This negative effect is offset even by extremely energy-efficient new construction only after many years. <https://restoreoregon.org/2021/04/12/understanding-the-carbon-cost-of-demolition/>

"Conservatively speaking, residential and commercial demolitions in the City of Portland are responsible for 124,741 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per year, which amounts to approximately 4.5 percent of the City's total annual reduction goal."

- "This study finds that it takes 10 to 80 years for a new building that is 30 percent more efficient than an average-performing existing building to overcome, through efficient operations, the negative climate change impacts related to the construction process."
- "calling upon policy makers to acknowledge the environmental impact of sending usable buildings to landfills; strive for density without demolition; provide meaningful incentives for retention and reuse; and maintain or strengthen demolition review requirements for designated historic properties."

While I and others want to encourage more housing opportunities in all neighborhoods of the city, I hope that City Council will agree on specific recommendations to mitigate unintended consequences. This latter includes a required five-year review on how much this zoning petition has been able to lower housing costs across the city.

**Erwin, Nicole**

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**From:** Sean H <sean.h.learns@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 21, 2024 10:54 AM  
**To:** City Council; Planning Board Comment; cddzoning; City Clerk  
**Subject:** Support for Ending Exclusionary Zoning

Dear Cambridge City Council Members,

My name is Sean Hwang, a resident of Cambridge living at 8 Richard Ave. I am emailing to show my support to end exclusionary zoning in Cambridge. Please table the Ronayne petition as it does not encourage building of more multi family homes in Cambridge. Thank you for your continued hard work in governing our wonderful city. I will continue to vote and donate for candidates who are for more housing in Cambridge!

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Esther Hanig <ehanig12@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 21, 2024 10:53 AM  
**To:** City Council; Planning Board Comment; cddzoning; City Clerk  
**Subject:** Ronayne Petition

Dear Co-Chairs Azeem and Siddiqui and Councilors McGovern, Sobrinho-Wheeler and Wilson,

I am writing to ask that the Ronayne Petition be integrated into the zoning process already underway in the Housing Committee. The petition, as written, fails to adequately address the need for more affordable and environmentally friendly housing by building more multi-family housing rather than single family and duplex dwellings.

The biggest problem with the petition is that it does not allow for additional height and reducing setbacks which is vital to the viable construction of new multi-family housing.

For this reason, I am writing to ask that you table the Ronayne petition and continue the Housing Committee process to find the most effective and productive path to the construction of more multi-family housing to make our city more diverse and equitable.

Thank you for your consideration.

Esther Hanig  
136 Pine St., #2

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Karen Falb <karenfalb@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 21, 2024 10:18 AM  
**To:** City Council; City Clerk; City Manager  
**Subject:** Good city planning for ALL requires more than the Ronayne Petition - careful specific REGULATIONS

The Ronayne Petition tops building of new multi dwellings at 35 feet, an improvement, but it lacks needed building requirements. A free for all isn't good enough for responsible city development. Amend it. Improve it. Get rid of dangerous loop-holes. Don't make decisions without visiting ALL neighborhoods - talk to neighbors - know their problems. **Your "One Size Fits All Strategy" is a problem.**

1. Good planning involves keeping in mind community infrastructure needed for the plan to work.
2. New buildings must be designed for livability. That includes good setbacks for sunlight and trees, and good right of ways. The building livability effects livability of the whole neighborhood.
3. Keep in mind the appropriateness of building in neighborhoods. Don't degrade areas from their uniqueness and charm. This means working with the neighborhood and the Cambridge Historical Commission. For instance, our neighborhood has a significant urban planning history. We have had stability in maintaining it. This petition and the proposed city-wide multi-housing policy would have neighbors always fearful of which neighbors are selling and high rises diminishing neighborhood character and liveability.

Building towards a homogeneous high-rise Cambridge too quickly - we don't want that!

Karen and Peter Falb 245 Brattle Street

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Marcelo Marchetti <marcelo.marchetti@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 21, 2024 9:40 AM  
**To:** Azeem, Burhan; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Pickett, Joan; Simmons, Denise; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Toner, Paul; Wilson, Ayesha; City Clerk; City Manager  
**Cc:** City Council  
**Subject:** Ronayne et al. and Azeem-Siddiqui Proposals: please vote against it

As a resident of Cambridge for the past 31 years, I want to express my very strong opposition to the Ronayne *et al.* and Housing Committee (Azeem-Siddiqui) extensions to the AHO proposal which already betrayed the 5-year review period mandated in the originally approved AHO. As has been noted in many ongoing discussions, these revision are being pushed ahead of that timeline in a desperate attempt to satisfy the special interests being catered while ignoring the opinion of the Cambridge citizens.

These proposals will negatively impact the city as they are poorly planned and not integrated with a comprehensive plan to ensure the livability offered by the city (infrastructure, public transportation, etc.).

Please vote against these two proposals to further dilute the AHO containment measures.

Respectfully,

Marcelo Marchetti  
7 Walden Mews  
Cambridge, MA 02140

Marcelo Marchetti ||| Email: [marcelo.marchetti@icloud.com](mailto:marcelo.marchetti@icloud.com) ||| Mobile: +1 857.928.0136

**Erwin, Nicole**

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**From:** Wayne Welke <wayne.welke@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 20, 2024 4:15 PM  
**To:** Planning Board Comment; City Council; City Clerk; cddzoning  
**Subject:** Support for Ending Exclusionary Zoning

Dear Councilors and Board Members -

I'm writing to you as a long-time Cambridge resident and a homeowner for over 50 years, in support of efforts to end exclusionary zoning. In particular, I write in opposition to the "Ronayne petition."

The shortcomings of this proposal include its failure to address height and setback requirements, and overall it does not propose sufficient changes to existing zoning requirements to effectively achieve the goal of much-needed multifamily home construction. As a result, this petition will not result in any meaningful amount of new housing for those on the lengthy affordable housing waitlist.

The intent of this petition should be considered in the context of the zoning reform process already underway in the Housing Committee, the Planning Board, and the Council. Please continue your important work to end exclusionary zoning.

Thank you,

~Wayne Welke  
Registered Architect

30 Dover Street - #3  
Cambridge, MA 02140

**Erwin, Nicole**

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**From:** Andrew S. <ams125@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 20, 2024 12:09 PM  
**To:** City Council; Planning Board Comment; cddzoning; City Clerk  
**Subject:** end exclusionary zoning

Dear Cambridge City Council,

As a concerned resident and voter, I am writing to express my strong support for ending exclusionary zoning in our city. I appreciate the Council's decision to move forward with this process and urge you to continue pushing for meaningful reforms.

The current citizen petition (the "Ronayne" petition) under review by the Planning Board does not go far enough to promote the construction of new, environmentally friendly multifamily homes. Its limitations on height and setbacks will not sufficiently address our housing shortage or create affordable housing options. Legalizing multifamily housing on paper is not enough—we need real reform that allows for apartment buildings citywide.

The Housing Committee has already shown unanimous support for ending exclusionary zoning, and prominent experts like Harvard professor Jason Furman and Paul Williams of the Center for Public Enterprise have voiced their strong support for allowing more height and density in housing projects.

I urge you to integrate the Ronayne petition into the ongoing zoning reform process and support measures that genuinely encourage the development of multifamily housing. Please also table the Ronayne petition until further discussions can take place.

Thank you for your efforts to make Cambridge a more inclusive and affordable city.

Best regards,

Andrew Solomon  
3 Linnaean Street, Apt 42  
Cambridge, MA 02138



**Erwin, Nicole**

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**From:** hwalker434@rcn.com  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 19, 2024 11:16 PM  
**To:** Azeem, Burhan; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Pickett, Joan; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Simmons, Denise; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Toner, Paul; Wilson, Ayesha; City Manager  
**Cc:** City Clerk  
**Subject:** Fwd: Ronayne Petition to Amend Zoning Ordinance

Dear Members of the Cambridge City Council and City Manager Huang,

I would like you to have my comments on the Ronayne petition, as submitted to the Planning Board in advance of the hearing on May 21st.

With many thanks for your consideration,  
Helen Walker  
43 Linnaean Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138

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**From:** "hwalker434" <hwalker434@rcn.com>  
**To:** planningboardcomment@cambridgema.gov  
**Cc:** citymanager@cambridgema.gov, CityClerk@Cambridgema.gov  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 19, 2024 11:07:00 PM  
**Subject:** Ronayne Petition to Amend Zoning Ordinance

Dear Members of the Planning Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comment on the Ronayne petition.

As you know, there are at least 2 proposals circulating to revise zoning to facilitate development of multifamily housing citywide: the Ronayne petition and the Housing Committee Chairs' vision. The Ronayne petition has the advantage of attempting to strike a balance between allowing more density of housing development and yet also preserving as much of the urban fabric and neighborhood character as possible. The Ronayne petition leaves the current requirements for setbacks and private open space, and the 35 foot height limit, unchanged.

The Planning Board reviewed a very similar proposal in 2022 and endorsed the overall goal of encouraging more housing development, while expressing reservations about some of the negative pressures that would be created:

- on scarce on-street parking,
- on open space and tree canopy,
- on the ability to protect existing structures "that contribute positively to the architectural character of a neighborhood."

I urge the Planning Board to pay special attention, and to go on record with specific detailed recommendations, as to **preserving open space/ tree canopy** and **urban fabric/ neighborhood character**. These will be severely threatened by current provisions of the Housing Chairs' vision (somewhat less so, by current provisions of the Ronayne petition) and by future changes signaled in both proposals.

Unsurprisingly, zoning districts A-1, A-2 and B are estimated currently to have lower ambient summer air temperatures than denser districts of the city. City climate goals demand that temperatures everywhere be lowered, not that temperatures in A-1, A-2 and B be raised. Thus, it is critical to preserve existing open space and tree canopy in zoning districts to undergo significant change.

Allowing greater density in districts A-1, A-2 and B will lead to a bonanza of teardown activity. While campaigning for City Council last fall, Hao Wang spoke movingly of how, after the fact, people of Beijing regretted tearing down the old historic neighborhoods. Please prevent similar loss in Cambridge. Demolition Delay review by the Historical Commission must continue and should be strengthened. BZA review, including the opportunity for neighborhood input, must be preserved. Development “without discretionary review” (page 14 of Housing Chairs’ May 8<sup>th</sup> slide deck) must not become the new normal.

<http://cambridgema.ig2.com/citizens/FileOpen.aspx?Type=1&ID=4050&Inline=True> It is important to remember that tearing down and sending usable buildings to the landfill, building new rather than adaptive reuse, negatively affects carbon reduction goals. This negative effect is offset even by extremely energy-efficient new construction only after many years. <https://restoreoregon.org/2021/04/12/understanding-the-carbon-cost-of-demolition/>

While it is important to allow more housing development in all neighborhoods of the city, I urge the Planning Board to agree on specific recommendations to mitigate unintended consequences.

With many thanks for your consideration,  
Helen Walker  
43 Linnaean Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** hwalker434@rcn.com  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 19, 2024 11:07 PM  
**To:** Planning Board Comment  
**Cc:** City Manager; City Clerk  
**Subject:** Ronayne Petition to Amend Zoning Ordinance

Dear Members of the Planning Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comment on the Ronayne petition.

As you know, there are at least 2 proposals circulating to revise zoning to facilitate development of multifamily housing citywide: the Ronayne petition and the Housing Committee Chairs' vision. The Ronayne petition has the advantage of attempting to strike a balance between allowing more density of housing development and yet also preserving as much of the urban fabric and neighborhood character as possible. The Ronayne petition leaves the current requirements for setbacks and private open space, and the 35 foot height limit, unchanged.

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<http://cambridgema.igq2.com/citizens/FileOpen.aspx?Type=1&ID=4050&Inline=True> It is important to remember that tearing down and sending usable buildings to the landfill, building new rather than adaptive reuse, negatively affects carbon reduction goals. This negative effect is offset even by extremely energy-efficient new construction only after many years. <https://restoreoregon.org/2021/04/12/understanding-the-carbon-cost-of-demolition/>

While it is important to allow more housing development in all neighborhoods of the city, I urge the Planning Board to agree on specific recommendations to mitigate unintended consequences.

With many thanks for your consideration,

Helen Walker  
43 Linnaean Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Michele Sprengnether <spreng2@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 17, 2024 7:08 AM  
**To:** cddzoning; City Council; City Clerk; Planning Board Comment  
**Cc:** Roberts, Jeffrey  
**Subject:** re: Ronayne petition to increase FAR in zones A and B

Dear City Councilors and Planning Board Committee,

I am writing in opposition to the Ronayne Petition because it does not protect existing multifamily housing in zones A and B from current market pressures to eliminate dwelling units in order to create luxury housing. I have witnessed many such dwelling eliminations in multifamily housing in my zone B neighborhood. 80Alpine.com is the latest example of a developer purchasing a multifamily and replacing it with a more expensive single family and making a handy sum in the process.

When California eliminated zoning for single family housing, they also had a provision that protected existing multifamily housing dwelling units:

"The loss of existing housing units (through merger, conversion, or demolition) is only permitted if the same number of units are created as part of the same development project."

See: <https://sfplanning.org/resource/DURemoval-supplemental>

The biggest impact of the Ronayne petition is to double the permissible size home by increasing the FAR in zones A and B from 0.5 to 1.0. It doesn't say this larger home can't be a larger luxury single family. Should the Ronayne petition be adopted without a similar protection of existing multifamily housing and a stipulation that the higher FAR must be accompanied by an increase in number of dwelling units, my prediction would be even more elimination of multifamily housing in zones A and B, accompanied by the creation of larger luxury single family homes, the opposite of the purported goal in the title.

I don't know the latest numbers for San Francisco, but the elimination of single family housing in that city has had an insignificant effect on the creation of more multifamily housing, and this was with a protection of existing multifamily housing in those zones. The first year after their elimination of single family zoning, there were 4 applications to create multifamily housing from single family in all of San Francisco.

See: [https://www.sfexaminer.com/news/housing/did-housing-law-kill-the-single-family-home-in-sf-nope/article\\_403bc3aa-9b4f-11ed-864a-27b14c9c0c6a.html](https://www.sfexaminer.com/news/housing/did-housing-law-kill-the-single-family-home-in-sf-nope/article_403bc3aa-9b4f-11ed-864a-27b14c9c0c6a.html)

I would welcome more multifamily housing, but please protect existing multifamily housing.

Sincerely,  
Michele Sprengnether  
31 Chilton St. #3

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Richard Krushnic <rkrushnic@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 10:50 AM  
**To:** City Council; City Manager; City Clerk  
**Subject:** Ending exclusionary zoning

- It is indeed necessary, in this market of near infinite demand for market housing, to end Exclusionary zoning; but only with mechanisms to create affordable housing for the people most in need, those making less than 50% of Area Median Income, and particularly for households below 30% of AMI. This is very challenging for the City because of very high land and construction costs. Even with such zoning, larger city subsidies would be required for the very low income portion of resulting developments.
- Thankfully, the Council has already added language to the original order requiring affordability as part of proposed zoning changes.
- Since a significant portion of development resulting from such changes would be less than 10 units, without an affordability requirement, there would likely be extremely little or no affordable units developed. This would continue the decades-long trajectory of rising land values and pushing out of more low-, moderate, and middle-income households from the city. All, or nearly all of the resulting units would be market.
- Even if new some resulting projects are 10+ units, that will not help the low-income people who need it even more, unless they have rental vouchers (waiting list for vouchers is currently 6000 for those living or working in Cambridge). And this would do nothing for households below 50% of AMI.
- Just building a lot of high-end market rate housing will NOT lower rents for low-income renters as long as high demand for market housing continues, but WILL push more of everyone who cannot afford market rents out of the city.