

**CITY OF WOBURN  
WOBURN CITY COUNCIL  
ORDINANCES CHARTER & RULES COMMITTEE  
COMMITTEE ROOM  
WOBURN CITY HALL  
TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2024 – 7:15 P.M.**

Voting members present: Chair Joseph Demers, Councilor Robert Toro, Councilor Robert Ferullo, Councilor Lou DiMambro, and Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen

Non-voting members present: President Jeffery Dillon, Councilor William Pappalardo, Councilor Charles Viola, and Councilor Joanne Campbell

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**Reading and approval of previous meeting minutes:** Motion made by Councilor Ferullo and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to waive the reading of and approve the minutes of the meeting of March 25, 2024; approved, 5-0.

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**Order amending the Woburn Municipal Code by adding XLII Zoning Ordinance Review Committee (Sections 2-258 through 2-261):** Chair Demers said he has sponsored this order along with Councilor Mercer-Bruen and Councilor DiMambro. He said one of the reasons he chose to file this order was because he expects there to be a lot of discussion about the MBTA Communities Act. He said he wanted to talk about the constitution of the Zoning Ordinance Review Committee (ZORC). He said he thinks that is a vital issue. He said he wants to have a discussion to get the ball rolling. Motion made by Councilor Ferullo and seconded by Councilor Mercer-Bruen to suspend the council's rules to allow any member of the council not on the committee to address the order; approved, 5-0. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said the MBTA Communities Act is what bubbled this up for her. She said there are also other ordinances that will require heavy lifting. She said what Chair Demers is suggesting with the constitution of the ZORC is much better, but she still has concerns about the number of council members versus the number of Planning Board members. She said she strongly feels the chair of the ZORC should be the chair of the Ordinances, Charter & Rules Committee. She said if the ZORC is structured properly there can be progress made. Chair Demers said a lot of the proposals the council is deliberating on now involve arguments against the current zoning. He said that is unfair for the petitioner. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said the Planning Board's participation is critical from a technical aspect. She said the City Council is mostly about policy. She said that is a big piece of it. Councilor DiMambro said he thinks the zoning ordinance should be tightened up and policed. He said the city is undergoing what he calls a 50-year transitional flip toward a residential component. He said the zoning ordinance was last revised in 1985 and is not up to today's standard. He said he thinks reviving the ZORC is a great idea. He said he likes the idea of combining the forces of the Planning Board and the City Council. He said he thinks that will give

the ZORC an edge. He said revisiting the zoning ordinance is almost overdue. President Dillon said he sees the Planning Board playing an important role in the ZORC. He said he thinks revisiting the zoning ordinance will be a big benefit to the community. He said he does not want the MBTA Communities Act to be the sole focus of the ZORC. He said he would almost like to see a separate committee to review the MBTA Communities Act. He said a decision will be made one way or the other by December 31 on the MBTA Communities Act. He said he thinks the ZORC should have more longevity. Councilor Campbell said she has a couple of concerns. She said she is not against bringing back the ZORC but she wants to make sure the City Council doesn't relinquish any authority. She said it seems like many different groups try to pick away at the council's authority. She said she would like to see more City Council members than Planning Board members on the ZORC. She said she likes the idea of the chair of the Ordinance, Charter & Rules Committee also being the chair of the ZORC. She said she likes the idea of separating the MBTA Communities Act from the ZORC. She said President Dillon's idea of maintaining the ZORC after the MBTA Communities Act is adjudicated makes a lot of sense. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said the MBTA Communities Act does not have to be part of the ZORC. She said she and Councilor DiMambro would have to be a part of any discussion since the majority of the work would involve wards 5 and 6. She said the heavy lifting that needs to be done on the zoning ordinance does need to be reviewed. President Dillon said he agrees that Councilor Mercer-Bruen and Councilor Dillon should be involved. Councilor Campbell said Planning Director John Cashell is putting something together for the MBTA Communities Act. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she and Councilor DiMambro are going to meet with Director Cashell. Chair Demers said the concerns about the council losing authority remind him of the time he was a member of an ad hoc committee that evaluated the plausibility of consolidating the number of election polling locations in the city. He said a report was submitted to the City Council and it got stuck in a drawer. He said if there is going to be an entity that studies the MBTA Communities Act it must be more official than an ad hoc committee. He said revising the zoning ordinance is a big deal. He said the council needs to be pro-active. He said there are references to the long-obsolete Boston Edison as a utility company in the current version of the ordinance. He said for discussion purposes the makeup of the ZORC might be three City Councilors and two Planning Board members. He said what he wants to avoid is something like the capital building committee that had two City Councilors out of 15 members. He said there is room for give and take but he does not want to get involved with entities like working groups. Councilor Ferullo said working groups are where stuff gets sent to die. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she would really like to limit the ZORC to two City Councilors. She said she does not think there needs to be three. Councilor Campbell asked how many Planning Board members there will be. She said if there are more Planning Board members than City Council members, she cannot go along with it. Chair Demers said he will look into what other communities are doing and report back. President Dillon said he appreciates Chair Demers taking the lead on this. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she thinks it's very important that the Ordinance Committee be kept in the loop every step of the way. She said the last thing the committee wants is something gets sent down and they only have two weeks to vote on it. Councilor DiMambro said there is a lot to absorb with the MBTA Communities Act. He said hopefully the city will have some sort of way to control it. Councilor Campbell said it seems the city may have a solution that may be as simple as reviewing the zoning ordinance.

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**MOTION** made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to adjourn; in favor, 5-0. Chair Demers adjourned the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

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Gordon Vincent  
Clerk of Committees