

CITY OF SALEM
JOINT PUBLIC HEARING
OF THE CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING BOARD
MARCH 7, 2022, AT 6:30 P.M.

The Salem City Council will hold a Joint Public Meeting with the Planning Board on Monday, March 7, 2022 at 6:30 P.M. for the purpose of discussing two (2) Zoning Ordinance Amendments relative to Buffer Zones for Marijuana Establishments and Green Infrastructure via remote participation in accordance with Chapter 40A, SS 5, of the Massachusetts General Laws and in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021.

Meeting opens at 6:30 pm

City Council:

Present: Alice Rose Merkl, Domingo J. Dominguez, Robert K. McCarthy, Caroline E. Watson-Felt, Leveille McClain, Jeff Cohen, Andrew W. Varela, Megan Riccardi, Conrad J. Prosniewski, Patricia Morsillo, Ty Hapworth (11)

Planning Board:

Present: Chair Bill Griset, Zach Caunter, Sarah Tarbet, Helen Sides, Kirt Rieder, Carole Hamilton, Tom Furey (7)

Absent: Todd Waller, Noah Koretz (2)

Also in attendance: Elena Eimert, Amanda Chiancola, Cassie Moskos, Hannah Martin (4)

ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT RELATIVE TO BUFFER ZONES FOR MARIJUANA ESTABLISHMENTS

Dominick Pangallo: Adjusts the buffer zone around Marijuana establishments. 500ft from schools, places of worship, 1000ft from Salem State. Having these strict buffer zones causes establishments to be concentrated in certain areas. Looking to align Salem city law with state law.

Councilor McCarthy: Agreed. Salem was one of the first communities that entertained the idea of these establishments. Concentrating where they can exist now as they expand. Makes more sense to mimic what the state mandate is. Have not seen any large problems yet. Will provide more opportunity.

Councilor Dominguez: Also agree. Remember when we passed this ordinance. Salem has a very active community of faith and education, would love to have them present during this discussion.

Councilor Prosniewski: Could Dominick describe the differences between what we are doing now vs what the state is doing?

- Dominick Pangallo: Buffer zone around schools would remain up to 500ft and buffer zone around funeral homes, places of worship and 1000ft buffer zone around Salem State would be removed.

Councilor McClain: Can you speak a little about the scope that is being considered? I agree that this brings us in line with state regulations, but from my point of view what is permitted has been pretty spread out. Almost everything is in different wards. Curious what we are not considering in this process.

- Dominick Pangallo: Pretty brief/simple. Does not address the cap on the number of establishments. Really just addresses the buffer zone. Everything else will be maintained. For perspective, GIS office did a brief analysis on cannabis testing labs and how many parcels could be added. The buffer zone reduced potential establishments by roughly 1/3.

Public Comment:

Jared Melanson, Salem State: Student at Salem State taking a journalism class. Asking the board, in regard to the buffer zone, why this was brought up in the first place.

- Councilor Morsillo: As mentioned previously, this was originally brought up to bring in line with the state's standards.

Scotty Hunt, Salem State: Also a student at Salem State. Here with Jared. No questions or comments at this time.

A motion to close the public hearing is made by Megan Riccardi and passes 11-0 in a roll call vote.

The hearing is closed.

A motion to move the matter to the Planning Board for further recommendation is made by Megan Riccardi and passes 11-0 in a roll call vote.

The matter is referred.

ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT RELATIVE TO GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Cassie Moskos: Purpose of this is to add language to prepare the city for greener developments.

Councilor Cohen: To add some historical perspective here, in the fall this ordinance and the two green building ordinances were submitted for review. Had some significant revisions initially. Went through the solar portion line by line. Believe that what is remaining now is excellent and needed. However, think the bike parking and EV charging portion is not done well. Once sentence in an evolving technological field. Too complex to have one sentence. When this is referred back to council, the recommendation would be to omit the bike parking and EV charging portion of this.

Councilor McClain: Agree with Councilor Cohen. Specifically in regards to the bike parking. Doesn't seem very well thought through. Not just bike racks, covered sheds and internal facilities. Doesn't make a ton of sense to me. Ground mounted solar systems make sense to me. Though a little concern of what this does to the appearance of property. Medium and large scale makes sense. A little more thought needed around what it means to have ground mounted solar in a residential area,

Councilor Merkl: Appreciate all of the green initiatives that have been coming through the council. Concerns would be around the financial impacts of the EV stations. Not only for the 25% that are going in, but also the 75% that would have to be accommodated in the future. Welcome more information there.

Councilor Varela: Recommendation that we have a more thoughtful conversation and omit the bike parking and EV charging portion of the ordinance tonight. Recommend bringing in the bike community to truly make this fit Salem's needs. Need to find a mindful solution for the EV charging. Requires more discussion.

Councilor Cohen: To address Councilor Merkl's concerns, many people in Salem have 100 amp power and can accommodate a car charger. 100 amp is about 33 hours to full charge. Level 2 would power a car in about 8 hours, costing 2-4 thousand dollars to upgrade. 4 condos, each one with a car charge, would have to upgrade to 4000 amp, would be 10-15k. Very much for the transition to electric cars. But this is not the approach we should be taking. Should be involving experts.

Kirt Rieder: Three topics struck me here. EV infrastructure: great to have good intentions, but is another thing to actually implement. Spoke about being EV ready but there is a significant amount of language to be provided around that. Regarding bikes, so much more to be fleshed out. The City of Cambridge has a fantastic bike ordinance. Advocate that we pull this out and redevelop it as a stand alone ordinance. Changing the numbers to be appropriate for Salem. Lastly, solar. Language around the Planning Board being able to review and comment on impacts of solar. One thing I'm not hearing about is protections for any of the city purchased and protected street trees. Green natural infrastructure will be affected by green infrastructure placed.

Public comment:

Eric Papetti, 11 Simon St, unit 1: Urge everyone to keep hearing open so the conversation of EV charging and bike parking can be considered in more detail. Think these are very important ordinances to pass. EV charging and bike ordinances are very important to pass a community. How can we act collectively as a community to move those modes of transportation from niche to normal. Need to dig into the details to make that the case. Urge to keep the public hearing open so more research can be done to get this right. Number one affordability hurdle is the need to own a car, the easier we can make it to utilize bike transportation, the better.

John Wathne, 33 Boardman St: Chair of Bicycle Advisory Committee. Very excited about the idea of building useful infrastructure. I drive so little now it is a novelty. Biking and public transportation is what gets me out of my car. Trying to build something by baby steps. Societal changes are happening now. Three paragraphs is not enough to cover.

Councilor Cohen: Great conversation with Eric Papetti recently. Knows a lot about bicycles. On both the traffic and parking and bicycle commission. Hope this body closes the hearing. But would like to have the EV and bike portions taken out. Allowing solar portions to move forward and allowing us to further build out the EV bike portions.

Councilor Morsillo: How do we feel about keeping open vs closing?

- Councilor McCarthy: At this point I think we move to close and refer to the Planning Board.
- Councilor Watson-Felt: Agree with Councilor McCarthy.
- Councilor Riccardi: Agree with a lot of what has been said. The way this has been presented, concerned about closing the hearing being of the 90 day timeline. Understand the purpose behind the joint public hearing is more so to collect feedback/thoughts.

A motion to close the public hearing is made by Megan Riccardi and passes 11-0 in a roll call vote.

The hearing is closed.

A motion to refer the matter to the Planning Board for further recommendation is made by Megan Riccardi and passes 11-0 in a roll call vote.

The matter is referred.

A motion to adjourn is made by Robert McCarthy and passed with 11 hands in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Approved by the Planning Board 3/31/2022.