

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ZONING & PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

MONDAY, JUNE 22, 2015

Present: Ald. Johnson (Chairman), Danberg, Kalis, Yates, Sangiolo, Hess-Mahan and Leary

Absent: Ald. Baker

Also Present: Ald. Gentile, Fuller, Norton, Ciccone, Rice, Brousal-Glaser, Blazar and Albright

City Staff Present: James Freas (Acting Director, Planning Dept.), Maureen Lemieux (Chief Financial Officer/Chief of Staff), Maura O'Keefe (Assistant City Solicitor), Karyn Dean (Committee Clerk), Shawna Sullivan (Committee Clerk)

#6-15 ALD. BAKER, HESS-MAHAN, ALBRIGHT requesting a discussion by the Zoning and Planning Committee with the Acting Director of Planning and Development of how Phase 2 of Zoning Reform might be undertaken, including the contents of the proposed Village and Master Planning and Zoning Reform Request for Proposals, including the planning process and ordinance revision process the RFP anticipates, as well as the staffing and funding needed to enable both in-house and contracted work under the RFP to be both well done and appropriately supervised. [12/29/14@4:00 PM]

ACTION: **HELD 7-0**

NOTE: The Committee received the draft RFP that was prepared in April. James Freas, Acting Director of the Planning Department asked for any comments the Committee might have on this document. He explained that there is a format to RFPs and there is quite a bit of boiler plate language involved. (Draft is attached). The Committee reviewed the document.

Project Context

The document starts with explaining the Project Context. It was asked why the RFP states that the current ordinance is based on a 1953 model when there was an update done in 1987. Mr. Freas explained that there was really no significant change to the approach from 1953 to 1987. Ald. Yates noted that there was a zoning amendments committee that worked on the 1987 update with active participation from citizens. It was a significant process and should be referenced in the RFP. Ald. Sangiolo felt that it should be mentioned that the loss of smaller homes is an issue that needs to be addressed as well as the need to preserve historic homes. The Committee agreed with both of these suggestions.

Project Description

Some Committee members felt the Project Description should provide as much direction and detail as possible. Others, however, felt it better to keep the Project Description as broad and general as possible. It does say that the consultant will work with the Board to identify both short and long-term issues and strategies to address them. If too much specificity is put in there, it could be interpreted that the inclusion of some things acts as the exclusion of all others. A new

term is starting at the start of the year, and a new Committee may have different concerns and issues.

Project Initiation

Mr. Freas explained that he would like to see this section expanded to ask the consultant to submit an overall project management plan and also a community engagement plan. Both of these would come back to a steering committee or working group for approval. The idea is to ask, as a first step, the project timeline, milestones, etc. and to define with greater specificity the process of engagement with the public. The key of this proposal is to try to shorten the timeframe and have, within a relatively compressed period of time, a very intense community engagement piece. The result of this would be the basic structure of what will be codified – the building types and the districts. It basically means the consultant team would be in-house for an entire week with the door always open. The consultant would design that time period with various public meetings, information gathering sessions, one-on-one meetings or small group meetings, open houses, etc. This is very similar to what Mr. Proakis from the City of Somerville did for their reform process.

Selection Process and Criteria

Committee members would like to see the selection criteria and understand the selection process for the successful candidate. Mr. Freas said the standard speaks to these generally, but they would add criteria that include experience with public engagement and charrettes. He would like to see some satellite locations around the City to draw people in and get a mix of input. It was felt that this should be a city-wide process instead of a ward by ward process. As a first step, Mr. Freas would like to propose that the consultant team present a community engagement plan in conjunction with staff to find the best strategies. The consultant would be asked to describe how they have managed this part of the process in other communities.

The Chairman suggested that when the Planning Department identifies the final 2 or 3 candidates, they could be brought into the Zoning & Planning Committee to make a presentation. The final decision is made by the Mayor and there is a procurement process, but the Committee could provide some feedback and be integrated into the process in that way.

Project Initiation

A Committee member said he would like to ultimately see the consultant take ownership of the work and to drive timelines, accountability and invested in the project. Mr. Freas explained that he sees this consultant, and any consultant, as a temporary extension of his staff bringing an area of expertise to the table. He expects to be in charge of this project as he is for any in-house project.

It was also mentioned that the primary Board of Aldermen involvement be through the Zoning & Planning Committee, not the entire Board, and that should be stated in the RFP. Mr. Freas expects it would be through some sort of committee.

Pattern Book

The RFP states that potentially appropriate additional building types should be considered in addition to those that are already present. One Committee member was concerned about adding anything new, but others were in favor of that concept so that this document remains useful for the future. Mr. Freas said the idea is to open up all possibilities at the beginning, then start narrowing down the options towards the end.

Final Zoning Ordinance

There is no mention in the RFP that the ordinance has to also be heard by the Planning & Development Board in a public hearing. That should be added. It was mentioned that the City of Somerville is still using the program whereby residents can add their comments to the draft ordinance. The Committee would like to see that in use when the time comes.

Timeline

Mr. Freas felt the RFP would take 3-4 months, and then some time would be needed to get the contract in place. He feels the project initiation would likely begin after the first of the year.

Next Steps

- The Chairman reminded the Committee that she'd asked members to look at docket items to determine priorities for short-term measures. Mr. Freas will be sending out a spreadsheet this coming Friday which lists all the appropriate items (via email as it is an interactive document). Each member should pick the three items they feel could be most helpful in the short-term to address the concerns they have been hearing from residents. Mr. Freas will come back to Committee with the top several items for action.
- Ald. Sangiolo is going to review her demolition moratorium proposal to be sure that all the concerns are actually docketed items and she will relay that information to Mr. Freas.
- The re-drafted RFP and the top action items will be brought back to the July 15th Zoning & Planning Committee meeting.

The Committee voted to hold this item.

#338-14 ALD. HESS-MAHAN, KALIS, SANGIOLO AND DANBERG proposing a Large House Review ordinance requiring design review and approval of by-right single and multi-residence residential structures exceeding certain dimensional limits to be determined, to expire by December 31, 2015. [09/05/14 @ 9:39AM]

ACTION: **HELD 7-0**

NOTE: Ald. Sangiolo distributed a memo to the Committee which is attached to this report. The online version has active links to various documents. She also referenced a chart which summarizes large house regulations in Wellesley, Cohasset and Somerville which was in the Friday Packet. Mr. Freas pointed out that the current Somerville ordinance may be changing shortly as they are in the process of zoning reform.

- Ald. Sangiolo has had conversations with people in Wellesley who have had issues with their review process which allows certain size buildings on certain size lots. Developers and builders look at the numbers as targets to fall just under in order to avoid review.
- The Cohasset ordinance states that a building may not exceed the greater of 3500 square feet or 10% of the area of the lot up to maximum of 6000 square feet.
- Somerville requires review on any increase of more than 25% of the original structure. Los Angeles still has a moratorium on 15 neighborhoods while they continue the process of re-writing their zoning.
- The Los Angeles link can be found in the memo and they look at FAR as well as percentage of lot area in their current ordinance.
- Manhattan Beach, California has been dealing with mansionization issues since 2002 and their Planning staff put together an incredible memo in 2013. They go through and review of their ordinances that had to do with house size and mansionization and determine how effective they have or have not been in order to make recommendation to the Planning Commission for changes. She is not sure of the outcome of that process.
- In 2006 Virginia Beach started a review of their ordinances dealing with in-fill development and mansionization. They included a study done by Annapolis, MD that looked at neighborhood conservation districts. They looked at created conservation zoning districts, height and setback limits, and also establishing design standards.
- Montgomery County did a study looking at traditional tools to stem mansionization.
- Washington Grove, MD had a forum and presentation on mansionization and put a table together that compared regular zoning tools and how effective they have been.
- Needham had formed a large house review study committee and they are in the process of recommending some ordinances for town meeting, but she has not seen that on their warrants.
- Belmont came up with a new design and site plan review process for single and two-family dwellings after a period of moratorium. They have instituted another moratorium on buildings in excess of 32 feet in height.

Ald. Sangiolo would like to see a draft ordinance that would create a review process for alterations, additions and new construction. She would like the Committee to decide if this should be a fixed number like Wellesley, or go with a percentage. She would prefer a percentage calculation. Design standards or guidelines should be created for whoever will be the review body, which also needs to be decided. Something needs to be put in place while Phase 2 is underway.

Committee Questions/Comments

It was felt anything that might be developed should be tailored as much as possible toward the goals of Phase 2.

Committee members asked if this would be a review process or an approval process. Somerville does special permits if the new non-conforming building exceeds 25% of the existing structure. A concern is discriminatory practice against people who could do something by-right, but then make them go through a process that is not equal across the board. Ald. Sangiolo would prefer a special permit process so that certain structures could be denied. It was noted that the FAR working group spent 18 months working on researching the built environment of the City. It might be a good idea to reconvene that group to review what they found. They recommended a sliding scale which benefits smaller lots and disadvantages larger lots. Ald. Sangiolo felt that could be helpful but there is some sentiment in the community that the FAR rules that have been adopted have not been working. She would like to expand the working group.

Ald. Johnson explained that there is already a special permit process and by-right regulations as well. The Board needs to be sensitive to and respect the property rights of homeowners. A middle ground needs to be found so that selling a home would not be an overly onerous process. Circumstances come up in people's lives and the need to sell a home quickly could come up.

Ald. Hess-Mahan noted that the Land Use Committee is extremely busy with special permits. The process is time intensive and very expensive for both the petitioner and the City. Costing out a special permit for City staff proved to be exorbitant. Adding more special permits to the mix really needs to be considered carefully. There are so many loopholes in the FAR and builders, developers and architects are figuring out ways through them. These loopholes were not anticipated.

He also felt that if the goal is to promote better design then a large house review process would be a good idea. One of the best things the Planning Department has done is require everyone applying for a special permit to come in for a design review team meeting which brings a variety of disciplines in the City to influence a design that will make it through the process. The reason FAR doesn't work is because it is applied equally but neighborhoods and lots are not equal. More specificity is needed and more zoning districts are needed.

Ald. Johnson asked if the Committee could have an update on the impact that the changes in FAR have had on building in the City.

This issue seems to require a process somewhere between by-right and special permit projects. Mr. Freas wondered if the Committee wanted to be able to see something that would allow review and improvement of designs, the ability to deny, or to otherwise countermand rights otherwise established by the zoning ordinance. He also wondered who the review/approval body would be and what the process would entail. Ald. Sangiolo felt the Urban Design Committee would have a hand in this, but she did not envision the Board of Aldermen being the authority. Not all review processes need to be onerous. She would like to work with her docketers to write-

up two processes: one for review and improvement and one for approval/denial. The Committee could then evaluate these and make recommendations. Ald. Johnson asked if someone from the Planning Department could assist with this. Mr. Freas said this could potentially have quite an impact on the community and he wondered if there should be public input earlier or later in the process. The Committee felt some work needs to be done on this first to narrow the focus. All the discussions are available in the Committee reports for anyone who has interest in this as well as audio on the website. Ald. Sangiolo mentioned that these discussions came up during the demolition moratorium conversations as well.

Next Steps

- Ald. Sangiolo will work with the Planning Department to draft both approval and review drafts of a Large House Review process.
- Mr. Freas will plan an update on the effects of the FAR changes.
- Consider reconvening the FAR working group and have them meet with the Committee. Also possibly expand the working group.

The Committee voted to hold this item.

Zoning & Planning and Finance Committees met jointly on the following item:

REFERRED TO ZONING & PLANNING AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#161-15 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to transfer the sum of two hundred ten thousand dollars (\$210,000) from the Planning & Development Department Salaries Account to the Planning & Development Department Consultants Account for the purpose of funding \$10,000 for the Newton Centre Parking Study with the remaining amount to be available for consultants in Fiscal Year 2016. [06/15/15 @ 3:30 PM]

ACTION: **FINANCE APPROVED 7-0**
APPROVED 6-0 (Ald. Leary not voting)

NOTE: The Zoning & Planning and Finance Committees met jointly on this item. Please refer to the June 22 Finance Report for details of the discussion. Both Committees approved this item.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcia T. Johnson, Chairman

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City of Newton Zoning Reform Project

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The City of Newton, Massachusetts seeks a qualified consultant(s) to provide expertise and assistance to the City of Newton Planning and Development Department and Board of Aldermen in developing a context-based zoning ordinance. The selected consultant(s) must have expertise in the theory and practice of urban/suburban design and zoning.

Project Context

A city of approximately 85,000 people adjacent to Boston, Newton benefits from a prime location with good transportation access to the region's job centers in Boston, Cambridge, and the Route 128 corridor and an excellent public school system. The City also represents an ideal mixture of good community design with a number of historic walkable and transit-oriented village centers, attractive neighborhoods, and beautiful parks. These amenities have made Newton a highly desirable community and, coupled with the strong regional economy, there is a high demand for new residential and business development. The fact that the community is changing under these influences, and will continue to do so as the City's demographics, transportation choices, and businesses evolve over time, has led to the understanding that the City needs a detailed planning effort, beyond that of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan, that prepares the City for these changes and results in a new context-based zoning ordinance that provides fair and predictable control to protect Newton's essential character and quality of life.

A context-based zoning ordinance is understood as one that recognizes the current built environment of the City, embodies that in Newton's code, and provides guidance and rules for development, redevelopment, and expansion that is consistent with that existing context, or with the desired context in those areas where more significant change is necessary. Newton's current ordinance is based on a 1953 model and has little relationship to the existing built environment of the City, resulting in development out of context with surrounding neighborhoods and a community that is estimated at being 80% nonconforming. Across the City, large "monster" homes dwarf neighboring homes; large two-family homes are awkwardly squeezed onto narrow lots; hard transitions between areas of different densities or intensities of use mar the quality of neighborhoods, especially where commercial areas meet residential; commercial redevelopment projects present inconsistent design quality; and the decision-making process presents uncertainties and significant expenses for small businesses and residents.

The City has already completed Phase 1 of the Zoning Reform project which was to modernize, clarify, and reorganize the existing Newton Zoning Ordinance. Information on this project can be found at <http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/lrplan/zoning/zoningref.asp>.

Project Description

The City envisions a four part process for the completion of Newton's Zoning Ordinance. Ultimately, there will be two major deliverables, a Newton Pattern Book describing the existing patterns of development and building types in the City that make up its urban fabric and the Zoning Ordinance itself, based on the findings of the pattern book.

1. Project Initiation. This project will be led jointly by the Board of Aldermen and Planning Department. Initial meetings will be necessary to identify the specifics of the scope of work, with a particular emphasis on a community engagement program that includes robust online tools, community workshops, and other tools for collecting input. This scope of work and community engagement program will be presented to the Board of Aldermen.
 - a. While the City anticipates this process to move forward expeditiously, there are a number of issues that require immediate attention. The consultant will work with the Board to identify those issues and develop short term strategies to address them. These strategies may be subject to change as the process unfolds and a coherent and consistent new zoning ordinance is developed.
2. Newton Pattern Book. The pattern book serves as the foundation of the context-based zoning ordinance as well as a guide for property owners on appropriate design considerations for Newton's diverse neighborhoods and village centers.

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- a. Beginning at the city-wide scale, it should look at development patterns embodied in land uses (village scales, commercial corridors, neighborhoods with similar lot and building characteristics, etc). The areas identified would form the basis for zoning districts in the ordinance. A transect-based approach may be appropriate.
 - b. The pattern book should also inventory building types present in Newton, describing common characteristics in lot and building dimensions and other pertinent features. This information would form the basis for dimensional regulations assigned to building types in the zoning ordinance. Additional building types potentially appropriate for Newton but not currently present should also be considered.
 - c. This work should include a multi-day workshop or charrette that shares with the community these design ideas and creates an opportunity to explore variations on the City's development patterns. Identifying areas where change to the existing context might be desired should be part of this exercise.
3. Draft Zoning Ordinance. The primary task in this part is to codify the results of the pattern book into a context-based zoning ordinance, incorporating ideas and approaches from Form-Based Codes. Some of the particular issues that will need to be addressed include updating and consolidating the use table, updating the sign regulations, incorporating landscape standards, updating parking requirements, better management of institutional uses as allowed under Massachusetts law, creating better transitions between districts, clarification of review processes, and improved site development and environmental regulations.
 4. Final Zoning Ordinance. The selected consultant will participate in the final adoption process after the draft zoning ordinance is submitted. This process will include a series of meetings with the Zoning and Planning Committee of the Board of Aldermen, a public hearing, and a presentation of the final ordinance to the entire Board of Aldermen.

Timeline

Subject to negotiation, the City anticipates the Newton Pattern Book to be completed within six months of project initiation. The draft zoning ordinance should be complete within 18 months of project initiation.

TO: Marcia Johnson, Chair, Zoning and Planning Committee
Members, Zoning and Planning Committee
James Freas, Acting Director, Planning and Development

FROM: Amy Sangiolo

RE: Large House Review

DATE: June 23, 2015

BACKGROUND:

Like many other suburbs located near major cities, Newton has undergone tremendous development pressure. Cities across the US have wrestled with problems associated development: particularly, infill development, loss of smaller housing stock to replacement homes sometimes 2 – 3x the size of the previous structure. Newton is no different. Below is a very short survey of municipalities that have looked at the problem of “large houses” out of scale with the existing neighborhoods and the ways in which they have addressed the issue.

National Response

Los Angeles, CA:

Recently, the City of Los Angeles, CA has been very active in attempting to pass legislation which seeks to limit the size and scale of homes. They currently have a *moratorium* in place for 15 of its neighborhoods (See: clkrep.lacity/onlinedocs/2014/14-0656_ord_183496.pdf and clkrep.lacity/onlinedocs/2014/14-0656_ord_183497.pdf) and are in the process of rewriting single family zoning laws and creating new zoning districts. The City of Los Angeles has a Baseline Mansionization Ordinance (See zimas.lacity.org/zoneinfo/ZI2391.pdf) that has been in place since 2008. The ordinance uses Floor Area Ratio and percentage of lot area as limits on development (and has a whole host of LEED requirements).

Manhattan Beach, CA:

Manhattan Beach has been wrestling with the issue of mansionization since 2002 when they first adopted an ordinance to address bulk and volume of single-family homes. In 2013, their Planning Staff recommended to their Planning Commission a number of measures to enhance existing ordinances to deal with the ongoing issue of mansionization in their community after reviewing the effectiveness of the ordinances that were already in place. See attached.

crms6ftp.visioninternet.com/manhattanbeach/commissions/planning_commission/2013/20130123/20130123-2.pdf

Alexandria, VA:

Alexandria reviewed their ordinances related to infill development and mansionization in 2006. (file:///home/chronos/u-6ce-93194ea6e569f0db772538d905fb3f25f287e/Downloads/infill_development_study.pdf). They conducted a thorough study defining the issues specific to their community, looked at specific examples, reviewed ordinances they had in place to address these issues, looked at tools employed by other communities and developed a series of recommended strategies to move forward. One example of a community they looked at was Annapolis, MD. They reviewed a study entitled, “Preserving Communities in the Face of Mansionization – Neighborhood Conservation Districts” (See alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/planning/info/infill/PNZInfillPresentationOnPreservation.pdf) where the City looked at Site Design Plan Review and examined different tools for managing house size – including FAR; SFR (Square footage ratio – similar to FAR except instead of setting a fixed ratio for all lots in a neighborhood – ratio increases incrementally with the size of the lot); and the creation of a maximum house size cap. The study seems to suggest to the City to look at creating design or conservation zoning districts, establishing height and setback limits and establishing design standards that address bulk, mass and local character as tools to manage house size.

The Planning Department for the City of Alexandria concluded that there was no “one-size fits all” solution. They emphasized the importance of site and building design and land preservation for residential neighborhoods, they did not support a requirement for discretionary review for every new or expanded single-family house but did recommend four areas in their zoning for potential amendment: steep slope restrictions, subdivision regulations, lot coverage limitations, floor area ration calculations and recommended the City create a residential conservation design pattern book with design guidelines for builders and architects on infill projects.

Montgomery County, MD:

Montgomery County’s Department of Planning put together a bulletin reviewing the teardown and mansionization issues in their communities and reviewing the tools they could employ to help protect older neighborhoods from the impacts of infill development. The bulletin was put together in 2006 to provide information on the various tools available to help address the issue. (See www.montgomeryplanning.org/historic/pdfs/teardown.pdf). Montgomery looked at the following tools: Traditional Historic Districts, Overlay Zones, Architectural covenants, An approved building height amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, A proposed forest conservation law amendment and/or separate tree ordinance, a proposed stormwater management amendment, a demolition moratorium, potential neighborhood conservation district legislation, and the creation of a builder/resident communication checklist.

Washington Grove, MD:

The Town of Washington Grove, MD put together a “Forum on “Mansionization”, in 2010. The forum included two presentations: “The Need to Control Mansionization,” and “A Short Review of the History and Efforts of the Planning Commission and Historic Preservation Commission Working Group” and then went on to a discussion about

available tools to manage growth and potential next steps. Most interesting was the analysis they presented regarding limitations of existing ordinances in addressing bulk and massing of homes. (See washingtongrovemd.org/government/hpc/TownForum2010Jun16.pdf) It reviews several tools to manage the issue:

Traditional measurement tools such as building height, setbacks, lot coverage and considers neighborhood averaging (Take average size of houses within a certain nearby range) and then determine a cap based on that average to be applied to new or expanded houses; Absolute Size Maximum: provides a limit on maximum square footage; Floor Area Ratio; Trigger approach – establishing criteria that would require closer examination or review.

Local Response

Cohasset, MA

Since 2004, the Town of Cohasset has had in place an ordinance requiring review for large houses. The ordinance requires that any residential building or structure, in any residential district, to be constructed either as new construction or as an alteration, expansion/ extension/ enlargement, reconstruction or replacement of an existing residential building or structure not exceed the greater of 3,500 square feet or 10% of the area of the lot up to a maximum of 6,000 square feet, absent review.

Wellesley, MA

In 2010, the Town of Wellesley adopted a Large House Review Ordinance requiring pre and post construction review of single-family homes requiring a building permit and where the construction would result in Total Living Area Plus Garage Space that exceeded certain limits for each of their districts. 3,600 square feet for dwellings within the Single Residence 10,000 Square Foot Area Regulation District; 4,300 square feet for dwellings within the Single Residence 15,000 Square Foot Area Regulation District; 5,900 square feet for dwellings within the Single Residence 20,000 Square Foot Area Regulation District; and 7,200 square feet for dwellings within the Single Residence 30,000 and 40,000 Square Foot Area Regulation Districts. In addition, 1) Any alteration of an existing residence in which the TLAG of the residence following completion of the proposed alteration will exceed the applicable threshold is subject to LHR, provided that the alteration will increase the TLAG of the residence by more than 10%; and 2) Multiple building permits that increase TLAG at the same location within any three-year period shall be collectively considered as one project for the purposes of LHR thresholds.

Conversations with Wellesley residents and planning professionals suggest that the limits are often seen as target goals for developers and builders to build up to the limit and may not have the impact the Town was looking for.

Needham, MA

The Town of Needham formed a Large House Review Study Committee in hopes to address similar concerns about “the impact new or expanded homes are having on the character of the surrounding residential neighborhoods.” Since 2014, they have reviewed

the increased sizes of homes in their study district (residential districts) analyzing the difference in the size of the original houses to the newer/altered/ larger houses, reviewed various zoning tools employed by other communities, including those employed by Wellesley, Weston and Newton and recommended only a few zoning changes to Town Meeting. (See list of potential zoning articles to be considered for Town Meeting - <http://www.needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10717>).

Belmont, MA

The Town of Belmont had a one- year moratorium to study and address demolitions of single-family detached dwellings where they were replace with a residential structure other than a single-family dwelling on the same lot. At the end of the moratorium period, the Town voted seven amendments to its Zoning By-Law requiring among other things, a design and site plan review for single and two-family dwellings in their General Residence Zoning District. New group was formed in January 2015 seeking Town Meeting approval to place a one-year moratorium on McMansions. (See http://www.belmont-ma.gov/sites/belmontma/files/u151/2015-01-21_moratorium_on_oversized_single-family_dwelling_units.pdf). Belmont approves moratorium on McMansions by a vote of 238 – 24. (<http://belmontonian.com/news/belmont-town-meeting-night-1-may-5/>)

Somerville, MA

As we learned from Planning Director, George Proakis, the City of Somerville has a provision in their zoning ordinances that require special permits for additions, alterations, and new construction for non-conforming structures if the resulting new build exceeds 25% of the existing structure. (See

https://www.municode.com/library/ma/somerville/codes/zoning_ordinances?nodeId=ZONING_ORD_SOMERVILLE_MASSACHUSETTS_ART4N0USST_S4.4NOST)

While not designed to deal with the large house issue, it was designed to require a review process focusing on the size of these non-conforming structures.

Recommendation:

The Committee should instruct the proponents to work with the Planning Department to put together a draft ordinance that would create a review process for alterations, additions, and new construction where the resulting build would exceed some threshold – either a fixed number similar to Wellesley or a percentage increase from the existing structure. They should also put together design standards or guidelines for the reviewing body.