

Dear Chairperson McCarthy Vahey,

Current zoning commissioner and environmental advocate opposes centralized zoning mandates

To: Planning and Development Committee

Re: Testimony opposing HB 6613, SB 1024 and HB 6107

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony opposing HB 6613, SB 1024 and HB 6107. As a business owner, attorney, zoning commissioner and resident involved in real estate and environmental health, I am intimately aware of how our state's local control of land use regulations have worked to preserve the unique characteristics of each community; I'm aware that many Towns are actively and in good faith expanding both the quantity and diversity of housing within their own unique existing built environment, topography, historic districts and infrastructure as well as to ensure a quality of life and protection of the natural environment for future generations.

While there is a need for more diverse housing, land is by definition local and local officials know best what works where. And they are working on it. For example, many towns are passing new regulations and initiatives for transit oriented districts, accessory dwelling units and investing in town-sponsored affordable housing developments.

However, the proposed bills will incentivize as-of-right dense development without regard to the unique aspects of each town and virtually ignoring the needs of historic and open space preservation as a legacy to future generations.

There is a concern that development-oriented lobbyists helped craft the bills without input from, or regard to, home owners, historic or open space advocates.

There is public concern that proposed mandates are hard to understand, vague, burdensome, and inconsistent with each other and with existing laws, place an onerous burden on volunteer, lay commissions and would lead to a great deal of litigation.

There is a legitimate question as to whether incentivizing 90% full-market-rent multi-family development will siphon development dollars away from affordable housing and middle class population from cities.

I ask that the Planning & Development Committee table the proposed bills (HB. 6613, SB 1024 and HB 6107) until the governor declares the COVID-19 pandemic is over and constituents have more ability to fully understand the drastic changes being proposed.

Such fundamental changes to local land use will have permanent adverse impact which can't be undone. People are just starting to return to normalcy and deserve time to learn about the practical effect of these changes.

If these bills can't be tabled then please vote no on each one.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kathy Braun
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