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CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Minka vanBeuzekom
City Councillor

DATE: December 11, 2013
TO: Donna Lopez, City Clerk
FROM: Councillor vanBeuzekom
SUBJECT: Communications & Reports from City Officials

Please place the attached communication on the Communications and Reports from City Officials on the December 16, 2013 City Council meeting agenda.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



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CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Minka vanBeuzekom
City Councillor

DATE: December 11, 2013
TO: Donna Lopez, City Clerk
FROM: Councilor vanBeuzekom
SUBJECT: Ames Street District rezoning

I am writing to clarify my "no" vote for the Ames Street District Rezoning petition. While I approved of the disposition of the Ames Street land, my "no" vote on the Ames Street Rezoning represents a protest against a rush to decision. In my opinion, the council did not suitably discuss amendments to the Zoning Ordinances for the Ames Street District (Petition expiration date: February 5, 2014).

There was no quorum of councilors at the only Ordinance Committee meeting held to discuss the Ames St. rezoning petition. At the unofficial meeting, the *Community Development Department* was requested to report back to the committee with specific zoning information relating to fast food businesses, housing types and housing affordability. This did not occur.

I believe we missed several opportunities to shape Kendall Square for the benefit of the public. The following are four specific reasons I felt additional discussion of this petition was merited:

1. **Unlimited Density** (Zoning Ordinance Section 14.71.2) Because the petitioners received an unlimited FAR (floor area ratio) for residential building, the city may now be limited in its ability to incentivize the creation of a maximum number of affordable units. The new zoning language seems to imply the city has now lost the ability to offer increased density for more affordable units (for low- and moderate-income residents) and may not expect 15% of units as affordable.
2. **Luxury Units vs. Family Units** I believe the city does not want to simply create *more* dwelling units we want to create certain types of units in the city. This residential building has the very real possibility of becoming corporate housing or short-term housing for visiting scientists and corporate executives. Asking for the creation of some "home ownership units" instead of "100% rental units" is one method of increasing affordability and in turn supporting creation of a residential community. I feel as a city we want to guide the type of units built—so that residents invest in their homes and the city. The zoning requirement to build a minimum percentage of three-bedroom units compatible with family living has also now been lost.
3. **Open Space Requirement** Eliminating the requirement for public open space in specific lots within this district seems reasonable as long as the Ames Street District actually maintains the existing 53,000 square feet of public open space. This petition suggests that the Open Space of the Rooftop Garden must remain to benefit the public so long as this new section 14.71.3 remains in place. This throws into question the need for a new 99-year agreement with Boston Properties to grant public access to the Kendall Rooftop Garden.
4. **A Variety of Retail Businesses** The K2 study calls for amenities for residents of Kendall Square not just the business community. Increasing the fast food establishments' cap from 3 to 8 within the Ames Street District seems reasonable but it might also create a condition in which other retail establishments such as a grocery or a pharmacy will be competing for the same space.

I am disappointed to vote against this petition because I think there are worthy changes to the zoning contained within the petition including reducing parking to an historic 0.5 spots per dwelling unit. I have withdrawn my request to reconsider the vote on Ames Street District Zoning petition because it appears unlikely that the voting outcomes on this petition will change.