

16

Small Property Owners Association

SPEAKING FOR THE FAMILIES WHO PROVIDE 75% OF ALL RENTAL HOUSING

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11 Jan 2001 11:51

Cambridge City Councilors
City Hall
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

RE: Preserving Rooming Houses as a Low-Cost Housing Option

Dear City Councilors:

We have just become aware that the City Council has an ordinance on the table that would ban lodging houses in Residence C and C-1 districts of the city.

This ban would affect approximately two-thirds or more of the multi-family neighborhoods in the city, in other words, a very sizable chunk of the city's multi-family housing.

We would most seriously ask the City Council to reconsider and revisit this question of lodging houses. We understand that there is a negative image associated with lodging houses. At the same time, however, lodging houses are THE lowest-cost form of housing for single persons, for persons in transition (divorce, job change, etc.).

Lodging houses (or rooming houses) are a critical form of housing whose acute loss in Massachusetts accounts for about 80% of our homeless population. The State Executive Office for Administration and Finance recently published a report on homelessness in Massachusetts. Since 1970, Massachusetts has lost 96% of its rooming house units, the largest drop in the country, and at the same time Massachusetts spends the most of any state in the country on homeless shelters and programs. While some homeless people do have some serious personal problems, the vast majority -- about 80% -- do not.

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss with the Council what can be done on the issue of lodging houses in an appropriate forum. We are sorry that we were not aware of this issue earlier.

We appeal to the Council's and the City's strong commitment to the homeless and to low-cost housing. And mindful of the fact that, once a law is passed, it is harder to undo it, we would urge the Council to delay action at this time and to consider further dialogue on this issue.

Thank you very much.



Lenore Monello Schloming
President, SPOA

215

Consent Communication #16

A communication was received from Lenore Monello Scholming, President, SPOA, regarding preserving Rooming Houses as a Low-Cost Housing Option.

In City Council January 22, 2001

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