

April 9, 2024

Malden City Council
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Public Comment of Michelle A. Romero, City Planner, Resident, 34 Greystone Road, Malden
Re: City Council Paper #50-24 – Mayoral Reappointment of Charles D. Ioven to Planning Board

I have worked as City Planner for 22 years and resided in Malden for 29 years. For more than two decades, I have had the privilege to work with Charles “Chuck” Ioven and the Planning Board. Mr. Ioven and I do not always agree, however, I have always had the utmost respect for his professionalism, character, leadership, and dedicated service to our City.

The Council’s failure to confirm Mr. Ioven’s reappointment is not justified by any legitimate reason or verifiable facts. At all meetings where you discussed confirmation of Mr. Ioven’s reappointment, certain City Councilors presented inaccurate and misleading information. This is extremely concerning, and I speak in support of Mr. Ioven and the Planning Board, and to clarify for the record:

1. Repeatedly and unanimously the Planning Board members have elected Mr. Ioven as Vice Chair and Chair. Mr. Ioven leads the Board with integrity, and he advances no political or personal agendas, which, in this day and age, is bold leadership.
2. In each decision, Mr. Ioven, like every other Board member, casts only one vote. As Chair, Mr. Ioven votes last, and not only is there typically consensus of the Board, most decisions are unanimously agreed upon by all nine members.
3. There is no factual basis for the alleged “lack of turnover” or opportunities to serve on the Planning Board. Since the Board was established, more than one hundred Maldonians have served as members, including the dozens of individuals with whom Mr. Ioven has served.
4. The so-called “missed housing opportunities” being attributed to Mr. Ioven and the Planning Board simply do not exist:
 - Of the hundreds of petitions over the last two decades, the Board has denied only two major residential proposals, in both cases, after hearing unprecedented opposition from numerous City Councilors, other City officials and residents, and after finding the projects may cause substantial detrimental impacts to neighborhoods, schools, and traffic.
 - Recently, the Planning Board, chaired by Mr. Ioven, unanimously recommended adoption of Malden’s MBTA Communities Zoning ordinance (CCP 418/2023), which has the potential to create 2,265 new residential units.
5. Any lack of understanding of the role of the Planning Board to change or create policy through zoning amendments is inappropriate to ascribe to Mr. Ioven and the Planning Board.
 - The City Council is the only body authorized to amend City zoning ordinances.
 - The Planning Board is required to review proposed zoning changes, considering substantive planning objectives, community need and general welfare.
 - The Planning Board’s recommendations are advisory, non-binding and not required, however, the Board still always makes recommendations regarding zoning amendments.
 - The City Council routinely disregards the recommendations of the Planning Board.
6. The Planning Board is statutorily authorized to make and update the master plan and will work with the Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development to do so (see April 4, 2024 memorandum from Deborah Burke, Director, OSPCD).

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.