



TOWN OF NEEDHAM

TOWN HALL

Needham, MA 02492-2669

Office of the
SELECT BOARD

TEL: (781) 455-7500

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October 22, 2019

Board of Selectmen
Town of Natick
13 East Central Street
Natick, MA 01760

Dear Board Members:

The Select Board of Needham has been closely following the progress of House Bill 3507 – Governor Baker’s “Housing Choices Initiative.” While increased availability and affordability of housing in Massachusetts are important goals, the bill as drafted eliminates the longstanding requirement of a two-thirds local legislative majority to amend city or town zoning. We believe that this requirement is important to sound and community-supported municipal land use planning.

Many communities, including Needham and Natick, have successfully worked within the existing structure to achieve the ten percent housing goal established under MGL Chapter 40B. We have proposed that the current provisions of the bill that would change the quantum of vote required to approve housing-related zoning amendments and special permits be amended to apply only in municipalities that have not achieved a Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) percentage of ten percent or more.

This approach would allow our towns to maintain what we believe are the proven benefits of the two-thirds majority rule. At the same time, it would incentivize municipalities that have not achieved ten percent SHI to move forward.

The Needham Select Board and Planning Board sent the attached letter to our legislative delegation. We encourage you to consider joining Needham and sending a similar letter to your representatives.

If you have any questions or need additional information please contact Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager.

Very truly yours,

John A. Bulian, Chair
Select Board of Needham

cc: Select Board
Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager
Lee Newman, Director of Planning and Community Development



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October 3, 2019

Representative Denise Garlick
State House Room 238
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Michael Rush
State House Room 109C
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Becca Rausch
State House Room 218
Boston, MA 02133

RE: House Bill 3507

Dear Representative Garlick, Senator Rush and Senator Rausch:

The Select Board and Planning Board are writing to provide further comment on House Bill 3507 – Governor Baker's "Housing Choice Initiative."

Increased availability and affordability of housing in Massachusetts are important goals. However, we believe that the longstanding requirement of a two-thirds local legislative majority to amend city or town zoning is important to sound and community-supported municipal land use planning. That requirement should only be restricted as minimally necessary to advance the housing policy goals of H3507.

To that end, our boards recommend that the current provisions of the bill, which would change the quantum of vote required to approve housing-related zoning amendments and special permits to a simple majority, be amended to provide that such lesser majority provisions only apply in municipalities which have not achieved a countable Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) percentage of ten percent or more.

Many communities, including Needham and others, have successfully and in good faith worked within the existing structure to achieve the ten percent state policy goal established under MGL Chapter 40B, and continue to encourage the development of appropriate affordable housing units. This approach would allow them to maintain the benefit of what we believe are the proven benefits of the two-thirds majority rule. At the same time, it would incentivize municipalities which have not achieved ten percent SHI