



Boston City Council
Committee on Planning, Development and Transportation
Frank Baker, *Chair*

September 13, 2023

Dear Councilors:

The Boston City Council's Committee on Planning, Development and Transportation to which was referred the following, message and orders for the confirmation of these Appointments to the Zoning Board of Appeal and the Boston Planning and Development Board:

Docket #0104 – Message and order for the confirmation of the appointment of Alaa Mukahhal as a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals for a term expiring May 1, 2024.

Docket #1283 – Message and order for the confirmation of the appointment of Raheem Shepard as a member of the Boston Planning and Development Board for a term expiring August 18, 2028.

Docket #1285 – Message and order for the confirmation of the appointment of Priscilla Rojas as a member of the Boston Planning and Development Board for a term expiring August 7, 2028.

These matters are sponsored by the Mayor and were referred to the Committee on Planning, Development and Transportation (Docket #0104) on September 28, 2022 and (Dockets #1283 and #1285) on August 9, 2023.

The Committee on Planning, Development and Transportation held a public hearing in the Iannella Chamber on August 31, 2023, to take testimony and consider the same.

Councilors Present: Chair – Frank Baker, Councilor Sharon Durkan and Council President Ed Flynn

Administration Representatives Present: Javier Salas, Assistant Corporation Counsel at ISD and Teresa Polhemus, Executive Secretary of the BPDA Board

Javier Salas, Assistant Corporation Counsel at Inspectional Services Department (ISD) attended the hearing and presented testimony on the mission, composition and jurisdiction of the Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) and in support of their appointment.

The ZBA totals 14 members – seven primary members and seven alternates with a range of experience as required by state law – who serve three-year terms. Alternates serve if primary members are unable to attend a ZBA hearing.

The ZBA is tasked with reviewing development proposals in the City of Boston. They hear requests regarding zoning issues, such as conditional use permits, variances, permission to expand or change approved uses, and similar zoning relief.

The Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) consists of seven members with seven alternate members that are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Boston City Council.

Teresa Polhemus, Executive Secretary of the BPDA Board attended the hearing and presented testimony on the mission, composition and jurisdiction of the Boston Planning and Development Board and in support of their appointments.

The BPDA Board is the official agency body with five members who come from Boston's neighborhoods and care about the city's future. They vote on all final determinations and agreements at the agency, including planning studies, rezoning initiatives, and project permitting. The BPDA Board will only act on final project approval following an extensive community vetting and stakeholder review process led by BPDA staff. Four of the five board members are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. One member is appointed by the Governor. Board members serve five year staggered terms.

The City Council's Committee on Planning, Development and Transportation reviewed the resumes and credentials of all the appointees. (Here attached)

The appointees responded to questions from the Chair and other Councilors regarding their qualifications, relevant experience, background, areas of expertise, and on the independence, rationale and criteria that they would exercise when making decisions.

All the appointees are experienced, dedicated and qualified individuals.

Based on the testimony and information presented at the hearing, and having considered the same, I respectfully recommend that:

Docket #0104 – Message and order for the confirmation of the appointment of Alaa Mukahhal as a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals for a term expiring May 1, 2024, ought to be confirmed; and that:

Docket #1283 – Message and order for the confirmation of the appointment of Raheem Shepard as a member of the Boston Planning and Development Board for a term expiring August 18, 2028; and

Docket #1285 – Message and order for the confirmation of the appointment of Priscilla Rojas as a member of the Boston Planning and Development Board for a term expiring August 7, 2028; ought to be confirmed in the attached new drafts.


Frank Baker, Chair

Committee on Planning, Development and Transportation