Planning and Development Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-06996
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING PROTESTED CHANGES TO MUNICIPAL ZONING REGULATIONS.
Vote Date: 3/12/2025
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 2/25/2025
File No.: 356

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Planning and Development Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Substitute Bill HB-06996 seeks to address a concern the voting ability in municipalities for zoning. This bill would aid the problems faced by many residents of the state regarding a lack of housing by making voting simpler for municipalities to pass regulations zoning certain areas for housing development, thus easing the already intense housing crisis.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language changes the "Area" mention in line 13 to that of "Owners" of said 50% of property which is necessary to sign a petition ceasing an impending claim by municipalities to create a zoning change.

And in line 16, the substitute language changes the current two thirds majority to a simple majority vote pursuant to zoning commission votes, which would make voting on such petitions and zoning concerns easier at the local level.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Anonymous, Anonymous: Supports this bill because it would enfranchise the greater whole of a community and not just a small minority and abutting property owners. It will also strike a

balance between the rights of landowners and the greater needs of the local municipality and community.

Partnership for Strong Communities, Policy Director, Sean Ghio: Supports this bill because it makes voting procedures more equity for municipalities in zoning from small groups making a supermajority in a protest vote. This balances transparency and public involvement in protest options while keeping development equitable.

Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association, Government Relations Officer, John Guszkowski: Supports this bill because it reduces the ability for highly motivated small groups from stopping worthwhile development pursuant to changes in the zoning law decided on by each municipality.

Also, the reduction of the zoning commission vote to a simple majority, strikes a better balance between elected officials and their constituents they serve through this simpler voting requirement for said changes given the will of the constituents of a municipality through their elected or appointed officials on these commissions.

Connecticut Relators, General Council, Jim Heckman: Supports this bill citing the benefit a simple majority would have on housing development in our state. Such a bill would support municipalities and their decision-making ability, while maintaining a bulwark against small groups outvoting the majority in such zoning changes. This would result in an increase to housing development in our state, therefore facilitating the creation of a streamlined system on which housing can be built, while simultaneously helping to deal with the housing crisis.

Connecticut General Assembly, House of Representatives, House Majority Leader, Jason Rojas: Supports this bill given the need to stop groups slowing necessary zoning changes through the low 20% protest voting threshold of residents of territory up to 50 feet abutting the land to be developed. And, as currently in the statutes, if one entity owns over 50% of the land, they can slow said progress on zoning changes, hence by lowering the threshold, it empowers the public's interest in speaking up for desired zoning changes against such large landowners.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Paul Arvoy: Opposes this bill citing the danger it poses to local property owners in the face of larger developer aspiration for profit at their said property owners' expense.

Jerry Cincotta: Opposes this bill because it would silence the voices of residents, who are best suited to vote legislation regarding their own municipalities' development and give that power to large development firms and such non-local outfits.

Michelle Coelho: Opposes this bill citing a diminishing of abutter's rights and decreased safety for the integrity of local communities by increasing the voting threshold from 20%-50%.

Citizen, David Fong: Opposes on grounds of the threat the bill is to small parcel owners and disproportionately puts more bargaining power into the hands of large parcel owners.

John Hair: Opposes this bill given the threat of a lower percent vote needed for zoning changes would empower large developers in circumnavigating, and reducing, the rights and protest of small landowners by favoring large landowners in their petitions in such cases.

Ms. C. Marcella Kurowski: Opposes this bill stating that such legislation would inordinately favor developers in recreating the current zoning statutes.

Western Connecticut Council of Governors, Executive Director, Francis Pickering: Opposes this legislation in its current form as it would disproportionately favor large landowners and silence the voices of local landowners in protesting zoning changes. In addition, the reduction of the vote necessary to enact such changes from a two-thirds to simple majority is also dangerous as it removes critical guardrails that empower local oversight and reduces the assurance that such development will be in the public's best interest.

Thus, this organization suggests that, instead of this bill, legislation be passed that gives municipal governments flexibility in determining protest thresholds on zoning changes pursuant to local ordinances. Thus, each community would be able to balance equal levels of improvement and public engagement in the zoning process, ensuring public trust and engagement as well as protecting municipal decision making.

CT169 Strong, Founder, Maria Weingarten

Kirk Carr

Jeff Williams: Opposes.

Reported by: Tom Atwood **Date: 4/9/2025**