



City of Somerville
PLANNING BOARD
City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

MINUTES
Thursday, March 26, 2020 at 6:00pm
GoToWebinar

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. C. 30A, s. 18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, as well as Mayor Curtatone's Declaration of Emergency, dated March 15, 2020, this meeting of the Planning Board was conducted via remote participation.

Meeting opened at 6:01pm.

OTHER BUSINESS

Amendment of the Planning Board's Rules & Regulations of procedure.

Bartman – very similar changes to ZBA rules and regs for fees to reflect new zoning code. Also have changes to how minor site plan approval works. These are changes to existing rules and regs to bandage during changes but expect complete rewrite in near future that addresses new code.

Capuano – even though we've always had minor site plan approval for lot splits, the planning director often used their discretion to allow PB to impose conditions to alleviate public concerns. Is that still the case?

DB – handled slightly differently. Subdivision is not included in this list; most of the things included will only affect two lots (won't create new thoroughfare like subdivision). Could allow for SL to kick things up to the PB at her discretion. Also, permitting process for building takes place much earlier in design process when buildings might not know who tenants are or the details of the façade and signage; PB would have review of building overall, but staff could deal with minor things once buildings get tenanted.

Capuano – fine with it in theory, but thinking of some examples where having the board review it and impose conditions was beneficial. Good to have director be able to send things before Board if they think that's appropriate.

DB – old ordinance had a lot of leeway in what signs could look like and how big they could be. Now cannot make sign that doesn't meet specific dimensional standards without getting a variance. Minor site plan approval would only happen for COMPLIANT proposals. Proposed language to allow for SL discretion to elevate any case to the PB.

JF and DKG fine with it.

AA – could we have conditioned things in 4-6 in earlier stages, even if things weren't fully permitted. How would that interact with minor SPA?

DB – if building SPA had condition about outdoor seating operations, their outdoor seating SPA proposal would have to comply with the conditions of the earlier SPA. SL is also allowed to attach conditions to minor SPA to make sure it lines up with earlier approval.

GA – question about 4-6, but esp. 5 – have had lots of issues with signage across the city. Glad to have proposed change of language.

DB – new ordinance much more detailed about signage than old code – harder to do something outrageous without getting a variance.

MC – motion to formally adopt revision with amended language. All in favor (5-0).

PUBLIC HEARINGS

RC – gave overview of two cases and how they are different. One is for SPSR, one is for PUD-MP.

Joe Hanley (atty) – submitted letter to Board requesting extension before COVID19 crisis. Client has secured financing, which is subject to permit remaining enforceable. Have started construction drawings. Partnering with EDGE Tech who is pursuing use change which has not yet been processed; the contract with them is conditioned upon keeping current approvals in place. Asking for a 1-year extension.

Ed Doherty – EDGE is proposing net-zero office/life science building. They are working on getting that permitted now, but contractually obligated with them to get extension. Bank also wants to make sure that permits remain active/usable.

JF – thrilled, wanted the office/life science use to be put there since original approval.

AA – extension was in part due to difficulties meeting conditions? Any specific ones that caused issues?
RC – in both cases, materials submitted indicated that there were process oriented questions relating to shift in use from ?? to office/life. Staff is understanding of issues, and glad to see applicant pursuing project that is more in line with what city wants.

PB2017-27-EXT1

74 Middlesex Ave & 845 McGrath Hwy

MC - Opened public comment for support; opposition. No one spoke.

JF motion to extend for 1 year. DKG second. Passed 5-0.

PB2018-09-EXT1

74 Middlesex Ave & 845 McGrath Hwy

MC - Opened public comment for support; opposition. No one spoke.

DKG motion to extend for 1 year. JF second. Passed 5-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

JF – next few meetings?

RC – city hall closed through end of April, so April 9 and April 23 meetings will be virtual. Unclear about May 7th meeting.

MC – any news abo

JF – supposedly a Council appt meeting soon, so this might be Gerry and JF last council meeting.

RC – council trying to move digitally. Trying to move forward with all items on agenda, including confirming new members for board.

JF – MWRA directors had a public meeting and legal opinion to do role call vote; do we need to do a role call vote? Don't want to have procedural issues.

MC – were other meetings video or voice? JF – both.

Revoted 2018-09-EXT 1

JF made motion to approve request through role call vote. DKG second. JF, DKG, GA, AA, MC

DKG motion to extend for 1 year. JF second. Passed 5-0.

DKG motion to adjourn.
JF second.
Role call vote. JF, DKG, GA, AA, MC.

Plans and reports are available to view in person in the Planning & Zoning Office, 3rd Floor of City Hall or at the City of Somerville website via the following link:
<https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/ospcd/planning-and-zoning/reports-and-decisions>